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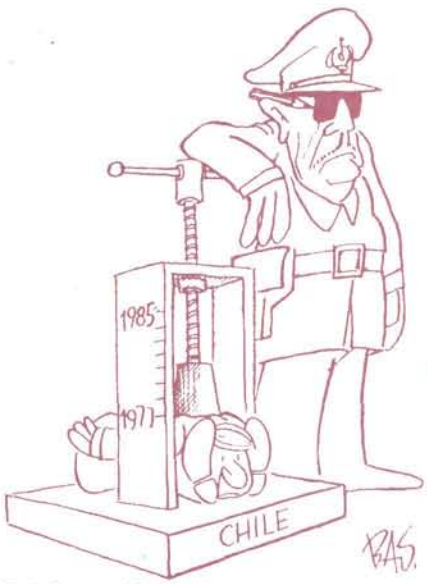
THE NATION

OCTOBER 15, 1977 *60 cents*

DAVID R. CAPLOE

The Return to Geneva
WILL CARTER BOOT IT?



Tachydromos (Greece)

Lofty Rhetoric and Business Interests

THE REAL LATIN AMERICAN POLICY

ALAN HOWARD

Art in Prison: 'A Way Out of the Sewer'

GAYLE E. WOOD

THE MALE MISERIES OF PHILIP ROTH ***Patricia Meyer Spacks***

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LETTERS

a doctor's doctor

New York City

No doubt many of my medical colleagues will find the article by George A. Silver, M.D. ["The System Is the Sickness," *The Nation*, Sept. 10] unacceptable, because they will focus on the negative comments on physicians. They will fail to give Dr. Silver credit for the title of the article which refers to the system under which physicians operate; they will fail to give him credit for his indictment of the many expensive duplicated facilities in hospitals; and for his advocacy of a step-by-step procedure in changing the system. After all, he asks only for a trial, perhaps in one state, before anything national is envisaged.

And why not? As medical practice is now, who has free choice of physicians? I don't and I am a physician. . . . Since I began in medicine over forty years ago, complaints have increased, not decreased. . . . Change is in order, and that is what George Silver advocates.

However, I do think he is remiss in not mentioning one of the prime reasons physicians today order many more tests and X-rays than are actually necessary. . . . Doctors and hospitals are constantly under the threat of malpractice suits if they do not cover themselves adequately in the eyes of the legal profession. . . .

When I was being educated as a physician at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, not one but many of my medical mentors emphasized careful physical examination, good judgment and experience, and performing the least amount of laboratory work possible. From anything I have been able to see today of medical education, there is a de-emphasis on the physical examination, and an emphasis on the student's knowing many esoteric facts and confirming them or not by laboratory examinations.

I believe there are many physicians today who, in spite of malpractice threats, and in spite of the need to defend and cover themselves at all costs in respect to the patient, still practice the kind of medicine I was taught. Doctors such as these doctors have been my doctors.

Ralph M. Crowley, M.D.

home from Harlem

Houston, Texas

Most of the large land holdings in the rural upland South are for sale, and at a reasonable price. Grain is not likely to go down, or gasoline, etc., and consumers cannot be forced to eat T-bone. So many doctors, auto dealers and other such are in the cattle business that it is not a paying proposition.

The homestead farmers are mainly long gone; the land offered is mostly county seat commercial classes, some that has been held three generations. We must by any means keep the pressure on and try to prevent public subsidies for the landholders.

Sandy loam will produce abundant food, labor-intensive. Light industry is needed in the small towns. The combination should sustain an additional 40 million people without stripping industry from the Lakes states. The people, of course, are those Southerners in the industrial diaspora, Harlem, and so on.

This is not a wild dream; it will come to pass in any event. The only question is whether we go with William James. And this is why I harp on the aliens. Our crippled youth must learn to work. They cannot compete with strong and malleable workers from overpopulated countries. What ever happened to the planners?

John W. Burns

The editors welcome letters from readers but regret that space limitations often prevent publication of those of more than 250 words.

EDITORIALS

For All or for None

As often happens when fundamental liberties are at stake, the principle involved in the Skokie, Ill. right-to-march case must be isolated from the motives of the American Nazi Party, whose civil rights are here in question. The provocative facts of the "Nazis' " attempt to march in their Hitlerian get-ups through a town with a large Jewish population, many of them survivors of German totalitarianism and its death camps, are extraordinarily repellent. This handful of lunatic demonstrators (who do not pretend to have any politics, not even that of the National Socialists they claim to ape), deliberately chose to try to route their march through a town where it would cause the maximum of pain—and therefore of publicity, which is all they are really after.

Quite naturally, the authorities of this town of 70,000 on the outskirts of Chicago took strong measures to try to prevent the ugly event from taking place. They got a court order to bar the parade. Then they passed three ordinances aimed at preventing this kind of thing—by requiring a large insurance bond to pay for damages that might occur from incited violence, by banning parades in paramilitary uniforms and by forbidding the display of symbols, slogans or literature that libeled a group.

Clearly, these restrictions were on, if not over, the edge of constitutional protections for free speech and assembly. The "Nazis" are happy to obey the ban on the provocation they sought and to sit back and watch the case make its way up through the American judicial system, probably all the way to the top. Enter the American Civil Liberties Union.

Should it have done so? A small but significant proportion of the ACLU's members, especially in Illinois, has resigned, angrily protesting that the organization has no business defending the right to "speak" (which the law says must include the right to demonstrate) of this loathsome little group. Those former members have attractive and even plausible arguments on their side, but in our opinion their views should not prevail. All sorts of values have been called "indivisible," but freedom of speech, that most basic of liberties, is truly the one that cannot be split without starting to disappear.

So we believe that the ACLU did the right thing when it challenged in court Skokie's restrictive ordinances. Provocative demonstrations that arouse the anger of the majority are, of course, not new in this country. The Selma, Ala. march led by Martin Luther King Jr. is one famous example from the recent past. That confrontation of a minority insisting on its rights with a majority whose institutions resisted their exercise was a turning point in the long struggle for full freedom for black Americans. The Selma march would never have taken place if the authorities had been allowed to ban it on the ground that it would provoke the rage of white opponents of civil rights for black citizens and therefore endanger the peace. Police exist to keep the peace, and in fact they did so, however reluctantly, at the bridge in Selma.

Two other major arguments are used against the right

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of the "Nazis" to march in Skokie. One is the familiar one that nobody has a right to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theatre, creating panic. But in the Skokie case, the element of "clear and present danger" inherent in that doctrine is missing. There will be plenty of time and opportunity for the people of Skokie to reply to the insults of the marchers, and thus there is no reason for panic.

The other argument is that group defamation should not be permitted. If that notion prevailed, much of literature, ancient and modern, would have to be banned—consider Shakespeare on the French. And Aryeh Neier, executive director of the ACLU, in a letter responding to protests from his membership on the Skokie matter cites a passage in a speech at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1962 by the late American legal philosopher Edmond Cahn, in which he said that, if there were prohibitions against group defamation, "officials could begin by prosecuting anyone who distributed the Christian Gospels, because they contain many defamatory statements not only about the Jews but also about Christians; they show Christians failing Jesus in his hour of deepest tragedy."

In Illinois, among other places, the ACLU has a long record of defending the rights of unpopular marchers. In 1966 it was Martin Luther King Jr. in Cicero. In 1968 it was the anti-war demonstrators at the Democratic Convention in Chicago (where Mayor Daley's police deliberately failed to keep the peace). Two landmark First Amendment cases (*Terminiello* and *Gregory*), reinforcing protesters' rights and therefore those of the rest of us, were handled by the Illinois branch of the ACLU. At this moment it is representing in court the Martin Luther King Coalition's right to march in Chicago's Marquette Park area. The record is impeccable because it stands on the principle that constitutional rights must be defended for all who would exercise them, not just those whom we would selectively tolerate.

Revolting as the "Nazi" contingent is, and painful as their proposed march will be to citizens who should not be afflicted by it, there is no way it can be prevented without doing serious damage to the liberties of all Americans, including the people of Skokie.

Closing in on Mrs. Gandhi

The other shoe finally dropped last week when former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was arrested on charges of violating India's Prevention of Corruption Act. Such a move has been awaited since March, when the Congress Party lost the parliamentary election, and twenty-one months of Mrs. Gandhi's authoritarian Emergency rule were repudiated by the Indian electorate. Her swift release from custody was effected by a local magistrate on a technicality. The government was embarrassed but will not drop the prosecution of its case.

Neither of the two charges against her may look very serious from this side of the Atlantic. The government has alleged that she and four former Cabinet ministers—who were also arrested that Monday—interfered in the awarding of a contract for work on the Bombay High oil field in the Arabian Sea, throwing the contract to the

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The Nation is published weekly (except for first week in January, and bi-weekly in July and August) by the Nation Company and copyright 1977 in the U.S.A. by the Nation Associates, Inc., 333 Sixth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10014. Tel.: 212-242-8400. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

Subscription Price: One year, $21.00; two years, $37.00. Add $1 per year postage for Canada and Mexico; $2 other foreign.

Change of Address: It is essential that subscribers ordering a change of address give four weeks' notice and provide their old as well as their new address. Please give Zip Code numbers for both addresses.

Manuscripts: All work submitted will be read by the editors. The magazine cannot, however, be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless they are accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

Information to Libraries: The Nation is indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, Book Review Digest, Book Review Index and the Public Affairs Information Service.

THE NATION

Volume 225
No. 12

OCT 11 1977

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highest bidder for "*mala fide* considerations and ulterior motives." Mrs. Gandhi is also charged with pressuring private firms to donate 104 jeeps to the Congress Party for campaign use before the election.

The allegations have to be seen in Indian terms to be appreciated. In the oil exploration case, the difference between the low bid, which was rejected, and the successful high bid was reportedly something more than $10 million. A lot of money even by American standards, this is an enormous sum by Indian ones. The government clearly believes that at least part of this amount ended up in the hands of Mrs. Gandhi or of her ministers or of the Congress Party itself. What is more, India's hopes for petroleum self-sufficiency largely rest on the development of the Bombay High field, and interference with its speedy exploitation is cause for alarm.

Theft is one thing; but theft of an election is another —and that is why the jeeps loom large. Indian politicians organize their campaigns around jeeps the way Americans base theirs on television. The Americans buy time; the Indians, wheels. Without jeeps a candidate cannot cover the constituency; without them, party workers cannot organize or get out the voters. A candidate reckons campaign assets by the number of jeeps available; four are considered necessary in most constituencies. The charge that Mrs. Gandhi extorted more than 100 vehicles is, therefore, a serious one in this context; perhaps equivalent in our terms to a charge that networks were forced to donate hunks of air time for a candidate's commercials.

But serious as these allegations are, there are more serious yet to come. For although Prime Minister Morarji Desai's government has moved slowly in building its cases against former officials, Mrs. Gandhi's arrest indicates that it may well have decided to prosecute crimes where it finds them. Its own investigatory panels are now looking into tens of thousands of accusations against the former government, the most serious of which concern disappearances, deaths and murders of political opponents over the years. Even the remaining corruption accusations against Mrs. Gandhi, her son Sanjay and other officials are likely to have significant international repercussions. A number involve major multinational corporations in a web of illegal commissions and Swiss bank deposits.

Mrs. Gandhi has asserted that her "arrest is a political one." But the greater risk has always been that the new government would check some of its own investigations into her rule, partly to allow political wounds to heal, and partly out of fear that she would expose corrupt officials within its own ranks. Why it chose to move now is a matter of some interest. Did its investigations simply take this long? Were the previous arrests of lesser officials part of a time-consuming effort to create a favorable climate for Mrs. Gandhi's own arrest and trial? Was the government's hand forced by the former Prime Minister's recent aggressive sallies up the comeback trail? Or, finally, did President Carter's announcement that he would visit New Delhi on his world tour bring matters to a head, lest there be the slightest ambiguity about who rules India at the time of his visit in late November?

The arrest, in any event, is a decisive step; the trials will be even more of one. If there is a possibility that Mrs. Gandhi may use them to rally support, there is the greater one that the Indian judiciary will conduct a decisive and damning inquiry from which she will never politically recover. It will be the kind of inquiry that Gerald Ford denied us by pardoning Richard Nixon after Watergate, with which the Indian events are often compared. And it will also be an inquiry that will establish that the Emergency was a reign of terror without the redeeming social value or even the necessity claimed for it by its perpetrators. In the process, we Americans may be reminded once again to stop condescending to Indian democracy and to start learning from it.

ROBERT KARL MANOFF

Steve Biko Is Dead

Steve Biko, the South African black leader who died mysteriously in detention last month, may have been the last of his kind who was dedicated to a peaceful transformation of that shameful apartheid society. His successors in and beyond the "black consciousness" movement he founded are likely to favor a more violent course of action. And the way in which Biko died will give reasons for this change.

Three weeks after his funeral it is not known just how he did die, though preliminary post-mortems suggest that he had sustained severe brain injuries. It is claimed, however, that the Minister of Police, James Kruger, was not told of his death for twelve hours. It is also known that, although twenty men have died in detention in the last eighteen months, without having been charged with a crime, no special precautions were taken to protect Biko.

South Africa's security police are clearly operating as if they were a law unto themselves. Kruger's astonishing series of statements following the death of Biko suggests that he is unable, unwilling, or even uninterested to discover exactly what his men are doing.

He told a caucus of the ruling National Party that Biko's death "left him cold." At first he claimed that the black leader had died in a hospital after a seven-day hunger strike, without being force-fed. Then he told reporters that the man's body had been found in a prison cell, after Biko had been fed intravenously. Later in the same week he said that the death was not connected with a hunger strike at all, and did not appear to be a suicide. Only after the most intense pressure did he agree to conduct a full investigation, at which time he warned, somewhat lamely, that police "heads may roll."

It is conceivable that, following the great international outcry which this death provoked, Kruger and his government will indeed bring charges against certain men in the police force. But this will do little to control the security police because the totalitarian laws which were used against Biko will themselves not be changed. In a system where a man can be held in solitary confinement indefinitely, without trial, without permission to consult a lawyer, and without the right to speak with or even notify his family, it is extremely difficult for interrogators to be restrained by anyone—even by their direct superiors.

Thus Biko's death presents the greatest challenge to those who still hope for peaceful change in South Africa. The good will of many whites and the patience of many blacks are unraveling as the fate of the country's black

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leadership remains in the hands of the security police.

This is so not only because that leadership can be tortured and killed but also because the interrogators and their government do not differentiate between black men and women who work nonviolently to win control of their own lives and communities and those who are already smuggling in guns to begin campaigns of urban terrorism. Steve Biko and the "black consciousness" movement he founded and led recognized that the struggle for freedom could not be won unless blacks began to establish their own schools, clinics, research projects and other programs in order to provide the skills and doctrines necessary for restructuring South African society.

There is no evidence that Biko ever deviated from these peaceful activities, yet he was treated as brutally as a member of an armed cell in one of the country's black townships. His death will force many others to question whether it is now not wiser to leave for other African states and undergo military training, as many students have already done. For with the security police unchecked, operating openly is as dangerous as working underground.

To America, Biko's death should reveal the impotence of its South African policy. As formulated by President Carter, Vice President Mondale, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Ambassador Andrew Young, it so far consists of strong moral condemnation of apartheid, continued economic cooperation, and a call for a national convention of black and white leaders.

Toward this end, Young, Sen. Dick Clark (D., Iowa) and others attempted to protect Steve Biko by consulting with him in South Africa and thus helping to establish his international reputation. In fact, just two months before Biko died, Clark told reporters that he was one of the men Prime Minister John Vorster must meet before South African-American relations could improve.

Yet this kind of diplomatic pressure and support was ultimately unable to check the men and the system that killed Steve Biko. It was based on the false assumption that the government would or could insure the safety of those with whom it must one day negotiate.

It is now clear that much greater economic and political pressure must be applied by the United States if it hopes to help those black voices still left in the country to speak out, or to check the reign of terror sweeping black South Africa.

Seniliphobia

American businessmen, who as a group seem more prone to fears, anxieties and foreboding than an 8-year-old locked in a haunted house, are once again shivering in terror. This time the cause of panic is a bill recently passed in the House that would raise the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 70 in private industry and abolish it altogether for federal employees.

The bill, championed by one of the doyens of the House, 77-year-old Claude Pepper (D., Fla.), startled everyone by speeding through the hearing and debate stages and passing by a vote of 359 to 4. It is expected to pass the Senate as well, though amendments limiting its scope are already being crafted. The lopsided House vote testified to the surprising strength of the elderly people's movement, otherwise known as Gray Power.

Business organizations claim that raising the mandatory retirement age will increase unemployment, reduce opportunities for advancement of younger workers, and wreck affirmative action programs aimed at hiring more minorities and women. The first two assertions are questionable, in part because there are no reliable data. One Senate study suggests that the number of elderly employees who would be affected by the law, and who would choose to work the extra five years granted them, would total only 200,000, or 0.2 percent of the labor force. In most large companies the average retirement age is below the mandatory 65 because workers voluntarily retire early. Some of these retirees may begin second careers, or work part-time, but no one is certain how many jobs they take from other workers by doing so. And it is hardly convincing—indeed, it provokes a certain bitter amusement—to hear businessmen who implacably fought (and in many cases still fight) affirmative action now invoking the interests of women and minorities as an excuse for dumping older workers.

Another argument against raising the retirement age is that the elderly are less productive, creative and/or flexible than the young. That may be true of some individuals but it also has the tinny ring of prejudice: old people in general are just as senile as blacks are shiftless. Experts on the aging process say there are strong indications that the productivity and alertness of many elderly workers drop precisely because they know they will soon be exiled from the workplace into a life of idleness, often with a meager income, in a society that tends to regard older people as annoyances.

The essence of the matter is that the captains of industry and finance have bestowed upon us an economy in which, according to the Labor Department's understated figures, some 7 million workers cannot find jobs. Their gloomy prophecies about the Pepper bill are nothing more than the latest attempt to turn disadvantaged groups against one another and deflect attention from the real problem: widespread unemployment in the midst of affluence.

For that reason, the AFL-CIO's initial hostility (now muted) to raising the retirement age is dismaying. Even more so is the position taken by Vernon Jordan of the National Urban League, who said that later retirement "would be disastrous" because it "would clearly hamper affirmative action programs." That approach accepts the terms of discussion as dictated by Big Business: that there are not enough jobs to go around, and that blacks, Hispanics, women, the handicapped, the elderly, et al. must squabble over who is to get them. The choice should not be whether blacks *or* older workers get a job. A job should be every American's right, as Vernon Jordan and other black leaders, of all people, should understand.

Let us suppose that raising the retirement age does have the evil consequences businessmen predict. Even that unlikely development might well have a salutary effect, for by increasing the pressure on available jobs and promotions it could force labor and the disadvantaged to stop sniping at one another and unite behind a serious drive for full employment.

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KOREA: THE IMAGE PROBLEM

JIM STENTZEL

We are a nation that elects its leaders more on the appeal of images than on debate of substantive issues, so it isn't surprising that day-to-day government operates the same way. Facts are less important than perceptions. Objectivity is less in vogue than subjectivity. Issues are less interesting than personalities. And through it all is the American fascination with style—how something is done rather than what is done. The media exploits, if it does not create, this phenomenon.

Take the Korea bribery scandal. The big story is what strategy Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski will employ as he jockeys with the Park Chung Hee dictatorship to get Park Tong Sun to testify. The bigger story, we're told, is how many indictments there may be—how many Congressional heads will roll, how many faces will be saved and by what means. It all becomes a game to watch on TV. Few people raise any of the policy questions about the subterranean U.S. relationships with the Park dictatorship, most specifically the deep historical ties between the American and Korean CIAs.

But the topic for brief focus here is current debate over President Carter's plan (*1*) to withdraw some 33,000 U.S. ground troops from South Korea by 1982, beginning with a token 6,000 by 1979; and (*2*) to give the Park regime $1.9 billion in foreign military sales credits. The debate has already became a classic example of sound policy objectives being buried and/or skewed beyond recognition by a nation dealing with its image problem. How do we perceive ourselves? How does the world perceive us and our intentions? On this level, all is given over to subjectivity—our anxieties about ourselves and our fears of others, our psychological need to be in control, our longing for the old view of a world neatly divided into good guys and bad guys.

Seen thus, the Korea debate is handed on a silver platter to the masters of such argument—a broad-based coalition led by cold-war strategists and including Korean War enthusiasts, die-hards of the war in Vietnam and assorted other hyped-up anti-Communists who know what's best for America's image, if not what's best for Korea.

So withdrawal from Korea isn't discussed on its facts or merits. It's referred to emotionally as a retreat from Asia. By equally convoluted logic, this means a retreat from responsibility, since Asia is perceived as our responsibility. In Korea also we redeem our image after the black eye of Vietnam. Korea is where we show reliability and steadfastness to our allies. Korea, in short, is where we "prove ourselves," whatever that means.

Certain people have pointed out the arrogance of this stance and have reminded us of the cost of similar arrogance in Vietnam. They have tried to steer the Korea debate back to a sound policy objective: a durable peace for an independent, neutral and eventually reunified Korean peninsula. They have looked at facts and employed logic: if the South Korean Army is larger than North Korea's, then our forces aren't needed; if we give $1.9 billion to Park, it will only strengthen our commitment to his regime, escalate the arms race, and thereby raise tensions and increase prospects of war on the peninsula; if the South—which has twice the population, three times the GNP, twice the economic growth rate, and over the years three times the outside military assistance of the North—cannot defend itself, then something is terribly wrong that cannot be corrected by more of the same U.S. support; if most Koreans seek a peacefully reunified Korea, then who are we to insist on two Koreas?; if North Korea wants to discuss plans for demilitarization and possible confederation, then we should talk with them; if diplomatic moves toward peace talks with the North undermine Park's justification for his repressive grip on South Korea, then so be it—we could use a little creative distance between us and his dictatorship, and if China, Russia and Japan are utterly unenthusiastic about another Korean War, then let's move on that diplomatic front as well.

In a major breakthrough for Washington, Sen. George McGovern dared to make many of these same points. In a speech last month to the Conference of Japanese and U.S. Parliamentarians on Korean Problems, he decried our continued, unconditional, firm political embrace of "a cruel dictatorship which mocks the values for which the United States claims to stand in the world." He supported the troop withdrawal but termed the $1.9 billion trade-off "deeply disturbing." "The United States," he said, "has been forced by the Park regime to pay for the privilege of withdrawing its ground troops." He expressed fear that the $1.9 billion would heat up the arms race. McGovern proposed diplomatic initiatives toward demilitarization and peace talks with the North. Pointing to Park's blocking of such moves, he said, "I can only conclude that the Park regime fears that any agreement with North Korea on this matter would take away its primary excuse for political repression in South Korea, which is the specter of an invasion from the North."

True to form, cold warriors who never die jumped all over McGovern, deliberately twisting his rational arguments into irrational nonsense. A *Washington Post* editorial led the way. By wanting Washington to "reach over the head of South Korea and start negotiating" with the North, McGovern seems to believe that the North "is superior in respect to devotion to human rights and commitment to peace," said the *Post*. It accused McGovern of proposing to "flush South Korea down the drain." The *Post* proposed a German model for permanent division of Korea and accused the North of blocking this idea—ignorantly missing the fact that South Koreans might also like their families and their homeland united. (That was certainly the mood in South Korea during the heralded and now scuttled North-South talks.)

McGovern replied that the *Post* has a habit of attacking his stands on controversial issues—including Vietnam—only to reverse itself some time later. One can hope that there will be an eventual reversal this time as well, but one wonders how many years the costly and possibly deadly cold-war games must go on before the *Post* and others consent to face the Korean realities. □

Jim Stentzel, a journalist in Tokyo for five years, is now associate editor of Sojourners *magazine in Washington.*

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THE RETURN TO GENEVA

WILL CARTER BOOT IT?

DAVID R. CAPLOE

Since coming into office, the Carter administration has proclaimed its intention to achieve a "final" settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and reconvening the Arab-Israeli "peace" talks at Geneva is seen as a major step toward that goal. Geneva became a particular preoccupation after the midsummer visits of Israeli's Prime Minister Begin to the United States and of Secretary of State Vance to the Middle East. Yet the chances for resumption of the Geneva Conference seem at this point exceedingly slim—in no small part because of the peculiar way in which the Carter administration has pursued its objective. To understand why this is so, one must first look at the forces bearing on the question of reopening the talks.

The impetus for a return to Geneva has come primarily from the Arab states and the United States. The Arab elites are tired. The confrontation states—Egypt, Syria and Jordan—are tired of fighting bloody and expensive wars against Israel. The oil-rich Arab states are tired of financing those bloody and expensive wars. All Arab states are tired of the strains—military, political, social and economic—placed on them by the presence of the homeless Palestinians, As a result, there is a powerful move among elites in the Arab world toward accommodation with Israel at almost any price—as long as the Palestinian problem can finally be defused. This increasingly pronounced trend toward "moderation" represents an underlying shift in the Arab world away from the radical, anti-American Arab nationalism that since the early 1950s has produced a belligerent attitude toward both Israel and the United States.

Not surprisingly, the new government in Washington is quite sympathetic to this development. That does not mean that Carter and his associates harbor any animus against Israel. On the contrary, the administration wants to maintain Israeli strength as a focus of anti-Soviet and anti-Arab nationalist power in the Middle East. Carter and his advisers appear to think that Israel's position in the region would be best secured by the consolidation of Arab regimes that are friendly to the United States and willing to deal with Israel. Thus, the United States now believes that Israel's best course in the long run would be to give up the territory conquered in 1967, and make the kind of adjustment on the Palestinian question needed by the Arab states.

But if the American and Arab elites are in favor of Geneva, the Israelis and Palestinians are opposed to it, each for reasons of its own. The Israelis generally, and under Begin even more so, vehemently reject any recognition of Palestinian sovereignty, no matter how formal and limited. They thus seem unwilling or unable to supply the necessary prerequisite for being acknowledged, however reluctantly by the Arab states. Like the other Arabs, the Palestinians are tired—of their long exile and of the almost universal antipathy their homeless presence evokes among Arab elites. Yet they fear a "solution" of the Palestinian question that might suit the interests of the Arab states but do little to redress the injustice to them that they feel is the core of the conflict. And the Soviets, of course, have little to gain from the consummation of an American-orchestrated diplomatic whirl that has up until this time almost totally frozen them out, notwithstanding their ostensible co-chairmanship of the Geneva Conference.

Therefore, if the Americans and the Arab states are to have their Geneva, they must deal with the hesitations of their erstwhile friends. The Arab states must get the Palestinians to go along with their plans for a West Bank mini-state, and at least formal recognition of Israel; the United States must get Israel to give up the territories occupied since 1967, and to ratify at least the nominal independence of the Palestinian Arabs.

At this point, it appears that the Arab states have done a better job than the Americans in carrying out their appointed tasks. The decisive Syrian victory over the Palestinian/leftist coalition in Lebanon has broken whatever military initiative the Palestinians might once have had. Given the Palestinian belief in the primacy of armed struggle to achieve their ends, this has resulted in the erosion of their political independence vis-à-vis the Arab states, as indicated by the increasingly moderate posture of the PLO in the past year or so, particularly on the matter of the West Bank.

The Americans have had considerably less success in bringing the Israelis around to a new perception of how best to consolidate their existence in the Middle East. This is a result of the interplay of the two basic facts of Israel-U.S. relationship: first, the almost unbelievable extent to which Israel is dependent on the United States for military, economic and diplomatic assistance; second, the almost equally unbelievable strength of support for Israel, both in Congress and in domestic American opinion. The first means that the United States certainly has the power to make the Israelis take a stance that, at least in American eyes, is in Israel's best long-term interests, however unsettling it may appear in the short run. But because of Israel's domestic strength in the United States, that power must be used with care and precision. Certainly pressure can be applied, but it must be done quietly and firmly.

But thus far the Carter administration has played its cards unevenly and with a great deal of bluff, thereby making the Israeli riposte that much simpler. The administration, practicing what Israelis call "open-mouth diplomacy," has been long on abstract pronouncement

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Vadillo, El Sol de Mexico

about a homeland for the Palestinians and the urgency of compromise, but short on the concrete actions that would cause such remarks to be taken seriously. While getting Israel's back up and eliciting the anger of its U.S. supporters, Carter's people have done little to convince the Israelis that we mean what we say about an end to occupation and a settlement of the Palestinian question.

This ineptitude is glaringly obvious in the almost blasé way in which the administration has responded to the two most important policies of the Begin regime: the expansion of the Jewish presence in occupied territories, and the open intervention of Israeli artillery and troops in inter-Arab warfare in southern Lebanon. In both cases, Israel has engaged in actions that can only impair the ability of the Arab states to keep the PLO under their collective thumb. In Lebanon, the Israelis seem bent on helping the Christian Right finish what the Syrians started more than a year ago, namely the military distintegration of the PLO. In the conquered territories, the establishment of more Jewish settlements can only be read as an indication of Israeli resolve to remain there for a long time. Both individually and together, these policies communicate a clear and simple message: Israel is not interested in any kind of accord with the Palestinians, and will use whatever means it can—either military (as in Lebanon) or socioeconomic (in the territories)—to limit Palestinian influence and even presence anywhere near its borders.

In the face of this attack from Israel, the Palestinians are increasingly unwilling to compromise what they believe are their vital interests for the sake of an agreement at Geneva. As they see it, the Israelis may be willing to strike a bargain with the Arab states, but not with them. As a result, there seems little reason for the Palestinians to go along with the plans for Geneva. This reluctance on the part of the Palestinians puts present leaders of the Arab countries in a delicate position, since they can keep the Palestinians down for only so long. If they try to go too far, there is the danger that internal opposition groups will attempt to come to power on a wave of popular resentment against the incumbents over the treatment of the Palestinians. Such attempts might well fail, but no ruler wants to hand his opposition a club with which to beat him.

It seems hard to avoid the conclusion that Israel is deliberately throwing a monkey wrench into the plans for Geneva by striking so harshly at the Palestinians. Given Israel's perception of its own interests, this is hardly surprising. What is surprising, though, is the American response, or rather, the lack of one. Carter reacted with a mild reproach when, barely a week after Begin's return from the United States in late July, Israel legalized three pre-existing settlements in the occupied West Bank. A few weeks later, when the Israelis announced plans for establishing new settlements in the occupied territories, the United States offered a formal and heated reprimand—but little else. While Washington did finally impose a cease-fire in Lebanon on September 26, the damage had already been done by almost two months of active Israeli intervention. In this context it remains highly doubtful that, even with a cease-fire, the Palestinians will be at all cooperative about Geneva.

There are two ways to interpret this strange pattern of American action. One is to conclude that the Carter administration does not really want any kind of Arab-Israeli settlement, even the one so favorable to its interests outlined above. Instead, this argument would run, the United States is interested only in consolidating the power of Israel at the expense of the Arabs generally and the Palestinians in particular. As a result, the benevolent U.S. attitude toward what appears to be Israeli provocation is not an inconsistency or mistake, but the outcome of a conscious policy decision to back Israel to the hilt, almost without regard to the consequences.

More likely, though, is the hypothesis that once again Carter has gotten himself into trouble by blithely promising more than he can deliver. The administration has voluntarily created a lot of noise around an issue that is almost universally considered insoluble. The admonitions of Carter and Vance to Israel over the question of settlements, however ineffective in doing anything about them, have mobilized the ample public opinion resources of the Israel lobby in this country. The politicians in the White House would be unlikely to raise a predictable domestic storm by criticizing Israel, unless they thought such a storm had to be endured to achieve something of even greater magnitude. Thus, rather than a sham designed to keep right-wing Arab regimes hanging on a bit longer, the Carter Middle East diplomatic offensive

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seems more the result of not looking before leaping into a problem of almost unparalleled complexity and emotional intensity.

But just because American policy is not consciously in bad faith it does not follow that prospects for a successful Geneva Conference are necessarily any better. The Israelis have seized the initiative in their relations with the United States. They have staked out positions and dared the Americans to make them pull back. When the United States has not done so, the Israelis have shown no hesitation in flaunting their gains in Arab faces. As a result, the already fragile grip the Arab states have on the PLO is unlikely to hold. If one then adds the evident Israeli unwillingness to recognize the Palestinians, there seems little likelihood of reconvening a Geneva Conference apparently destined to fail even before it starts.

The particular painfulness of this grim situation is the fact that a different U.S. strategy could perhaps make Geneva a real possibility. At the moment, it seems probable that the United States will lose the confidence of both Israel and the pro-U.S. Arab regimes without gaining anything in return. The administration has shot from the hip on such emotional and symbolic issues as a Palestinian homeland and return of the conquered territories, thereby setting Israeli nerves aflutter. At the same time, its failure to take decisive, concrete action against Israeli provocation in the occupied territories and in Lebanon has left America's Arab clients wondering if they are being kidded.

The gravity of the U.S. dilemma is revealed by the October 1st announcement of a broadly, but nevertheless clearly, defined American-Soviet position on the outlines of a Geneva settlement. The substance of the statement is not particularly startling, aside perhaps from the American acceptance of the Soviet-Arab terminology of Palestinian "rights" instead of "interests"; this is no doubt intended as a signal of sorts to Israel. More important is the fact that Carter felt impelled by the deterioration of negotiating prospects to do what U.S. policy makers have been trying to avoid for years, namely, include the Soviet Union as an active partner in achieving a negotiated Arab-Israeli settlement. The Soviets cannot but welcome this new development, since they would otherwise find themselves powerless to stop the institution of a *pax Americana* in the Middle East. For the Americans, it is a tacit admission of two related aspects of their problem: first, that Israeli provocation is making the Palestinians too difficult for the Arab states to keep in line by themselves; and second, that if Palestinian cooperation at Geneva is to be assured, the Soviet Union, the only significant non-Arab source of support for the Palestinians, must be more fully brought into the picture.

The imposition of the cease-fire in Lebanon, Begin's refusal, at least for the moment, to allow further settlement in the occupied territories (see *The New York Times* of September 27), and the new involvement of the Soviet Union all indicate that the Carter team is perhaps beginning to realize the mistakes it has made in this arena. If so, there may still be a chance to revive Geneva. That would be good news for the administration, if for no one else. The Lance affair has already raised doubts about the ability of the administration to keep the big promises it loudly makes. A failure to reach the goal set by U.S. policy in the Middle East would confirm the feeling of many observers that the Carter administration has not yet learned to look where it is going. □

GENETIC ROULETTE

The Hazards of Altering Nature

JOYCE MILTON

Ever since mid-1973, when a group of molecular biologists attending the annual Gordon Conference on Nucleic Acids arranged to publish an unprecedented expression of concern in the journal *Science*, the public has been hearing about the possible dangers of research with a new technique known as recombinant DNA. Prominent scientists warned that the experiments, more vividly known as gene splicing, might result in man-made organisms capable of causing everything from global epidemics to environmental and evolutionary havoc. A larger number worried about more subtle but hard-to-pin-down problems, such as an increased rate of urinary infections or the contamination of human genes by tumor virus DNA, which is known to cause cancer in animals and is still controversial with respect to human cancers.

Because the technique was brand new, and because so much about the mechanisms of genetic control was, and still is, poorly understood, the hazards discussed in *Science* were a matter of speculation. One focus of the argument—the use of the bacteria E. Coli as "host" organism for spliced genes—illustrates the kind of unknowns that confront scientists: although E. Coli is a ubiquitous and normally harmless resident of the human digestive tract, and although it has been called the best-studied organism in the world after man himself, molecular biologists discovered that their familiarity with E. Coli's behavior under laboratory conditions did not really enable them to predict with an adequate degree of assurance whether genetically altered laboratory strains of the bacteria could survive outside the test tube and whether, if they did, they would become a menace.

By 1974, the prospect was seen as worrisome enough to cause eleven leaders in the field to call for a tem-

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porary halt on certain particularly questionable types of gene-splicing experiment. And at a follow-up meeting held at the Asilomar conference center in California early the next year, molecular biologists voted overwhelmingly in favor of regulating the research. Subsequently, distinguished pioneers in the field, under the aegis of the National Institutes of Health, collaborated on a set of guidelines for gene splicing.

Two years later fears about the hazards of gene splicing were no longer confined to the scientific world. In mid-1976 a debate among Harvard faculty over a proposal to remodel one floor of the biological laboratory into a faculty for moderate-risk recombinant DNA research spilled over into two bitter, tension-filled public hearings before the Cambridge City Council. Public suspicions were aroused, and Cambridge Mayor Vellucci predicted that his blue-collar constituents would have voted overwhelmingly to bar the research. Nevertheless, a lay review board appointed by City Manager James Sullivan concluded that moderate-risk experiments could proceed, subject to somewhat stiffer controls imposed by the NIH guidelines. Similar controversy elsewhere raised the prospect of conflicting regulations. This, plus growing awareness that industry, which was not covered by the guidelines, would soon be using the new technology on a far larger scale, led many observers to conclude that uniform federal regulations would be an obvious next step.

Then, very recently, just as legislation which would have made the guidelines mandatory for all academic and industrial laboratories was taking shape, the situation seemed to change dramatically. A *New York Times* article (July 24) headlined "No Sci-Fi Nightmare After All," announced that molecular biologists now consider the dangers of the research to be "minimal." And a similar report in the August 15th issue of *Time* quoted geneticist Roy Curtiss III of the University of Alabama as saying that current work presents "no threat whatsoever."

As the authors of these and similar articles all noted, the scientists' new confidence in gene splicing coincided conveniently with their adamant opposition to proposed federal legislation governing the research. The particular target of the scientists' ire has been a bill sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (S. 1217) which would have created a federal commission under HEW to oversee the licensing and inspection of laboratories. Weaker bills, one sponsored by Rep. Paul Rogers in the House (H.R. 7897) and a Senate amendment proposed by Gaylord Nelson, would have left enforcement of the regulations largely in the hands of institutional biohazards committees. There have been widespread charges from the scientific community that Kennedy's commission would be "unworkable" and "unprecedented," although a precedent exists in the Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Behavioral and Biomedical Research, which has won general respect despite similar warnings when it was first proposed.

An active scientists' lobby, armed with well-publicized reports that the research is not hazardous "after all," has bogged down the Kennedy bill which once seemed likely to reach the Senate floor late last August. It is now possible that there will be no action on Kennedy's or anyone else's recombinant DNA bill this session.

Meanwhile, the controversy has raised some knotty problems, many of which concern the activities of large institutional laboratories, generously funded by tax and corporate dollars, that currently set the foundations for genetic engineering as a new technology. Where does one draw the line between freedom of inquiry and the public's right to protect itself from hazards and to make policy concerning research that may have a revolutionary effect on the lives of us all? Where, given the dramatic nature of contemporary genetic research, is the line to be drawn between studying nature and altering it? A more vexing problem for citizens in a democracy is how to go about forming opinions on such matters. The evidence is technically so complex that we tend to rely on the judgments of the experts, as these filter down to us through reports in the popular press. However, it is important to realize that, when it comes to predicting the total environmental impact of recombinant DNA research, even a molecular biologist may be forced to acknowledge the limitations of his expertise. A nonscientist myself, I have devoted countless hours over a period of months to familiarizing myself with the background of the controversy. And while I do not intend to launch into a debate on the technical problems involved, I do know enough to realize that the reassurances we have been hearing are considerably less precise than they seem.

A case in point is the press reports of last June's Falmouth Workshop on Studies for Assessment of Potential Risks Associated with Recombinant DNA Experimentation. This workshop, organized by Dr. Sherwood Gorbach of the Tufts University School of Medicine under a grant from the NIH, brought together some forty scientists, including specialists in infectious diseases. The limited participation of such specialists in the writing of the NIH guidelines had been much criticized. Unfortunately, the Falmouth workshop did not qualify as an official NIH deliberation and the proceedings were not recorded in the *Federal Register*. Reports in the Washington and New York press were scanty. One article, by science reporter Victor Cohn of *The Washington Post*, focused on the conclusion from Dr. Gorbach's informal summation of the conference to NIH Director Donald Fredrickson that the conferees "unanimously" agreed that the possibility of recombinant DNA organisms becoming the cause of "runaway epidemics" was "virtually nonexistent."

Readers of the Cohn article would not have realized that the possibility of a "runaway" epidemic was only one of several degrees of hazard discussed at Falmouth and was never, in the minds of many of the participants, the most pertinent. On other matters, the Falmouth scientists were not in unanimous agreement and the current objections of some of them suggest that the battle lines have not shifted much in the past year.

One dissenter is Dr. Bruce Levin, an associate professor in evolutionary biology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In a carefully worded open letter to Dr. Fredrickson, he said that he was "deeply concerned" that the Cohn article would be "misinterpreted" by the general public. Levin stressed his own concern that research should not be unduly inhibited and his convic-

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tion that "objective assessment of these potential risks is possible and could be achieved within a relatively short period of time." Yet he protests that the consensus that laboratory strains of E. Coli are "unlikely" to be the agent of epidemics is "very comforting . . . but only part of the story." The rest of the story, as Levin sees it, is outlined in his 4-page summary of unanswered technical problems. What bothers Levin, it appears, is that both scientists and the public will be led to draw conclusions on the basis of a combination of insufficient evidence and incautious optimism. He himself admits to being "sympathetic" to a number of *a priori* arguments in favor of the research's innocuousness, but adds, "I am strongly opposed to an evolutionary laissez-faire view being offered as a sufficient argument for the safety of these procedures. . . . The time for prudence remains."

Another Falmouth participant who is unhappy about the glancing treatment the workshop received in the press is Jonathan King, an associate professor of biology at M.I.T. and from the beginning an outspoken opponent of the research. Says King, "I learned that I had voted that E. Coli was safe when I read it in the newspapers." King's objections to gene splicing have never been based on visions of doomsday plague or man-made epidemic. He has stressed less dramatic possibilities, suggesting in effect that human exposure to recombinant genes in E. Coli might disrupt the body's auto-immune system or that genetically altered laboratory E. Coli might possibly take on some of the characteristics of certain disease-causing strains that exist in nature. Far from having changed his mind, King now says that Falmouth confirmed for him that specialists from other disciplines took seriously "some of the things I have been worried about." King and Dr. Richard Goldstein, an assistant professor at the Harvard Medical School, addressed to their colleagues a joint letter ("Dear phage workers . . .") a letter that summarizes their reactions to the workshop and echoes Levin's concern with "possibly misleading and incomplete reports of the proceedings. . . ."

Along with the Falmouth workshop, the most widely reported source of reassurance on the safety of gene-splicing research has been the 13-page statement prepared by Dr. Roy Curtiss III of the University of Alabama. Curtiss's opinions carry considerable weight because he is known to have been one of the most dedicated and cautious members of the committee that wrote the NIH guidelines. Therefore, his change of heart is generally acknowledged to have influenced many biologists to sign petitions this summer against the Kennedy, and later all, recombinant DNA legislation. When it was decided back in 1975 that only gene-splicing experiments classed as relatively hazardous ought to be done with a special "genetically enfeebled" strain of E. Coli, Curtiss volunteered to develop one. That work did not win him universal thanks. While his new "disarmed" strain, patriotically named x1776 (x designates Greek letter *chi*) has been welcomed by the research's critics, some of whom would have it used across the board in recombinant DNA work, many gene-splicing practitioners have complained that it reproduces slowly and is generally inconvenient for experimental purposes. Interestingly enough, Curtiss's April letter implies that the widespread use of x1776 may be unnecessary. He says that he has since concluded that recombinant DNA experiments employing ordinary laboratory strains of E. Coli K12 do not represent "any danger whatsoever" except in the hands of an "extremely careless" researcher, or under certain other "stupid and highly unlikely" conditions.

The important thing for laymen to remember about this statement is that the evidence on which Curtiss based his conclusions has not yet been fully set forth. Curtiss is said to be preparing a number of journal articles explaining his new position, and it will be months before the scientific community has a chance to evaluate and respond to his current ideas. Another interesting point the *Time* article cited above fails to mention, when it refers to Curtiss, is that his letter reaffirms his support for legislation embodying some form of the NIH guidelines. The practical target of Curtiss's attack is, once again, the Kennedy bill. According to Curtiss, "hard-working and conscientious" institutional biohazard committees would be seriously undermined if forced to share authority with outside inspectors named by a federal commission. Whether all such biohazard committees are as effective as they apparently have been in Curtiss's experience, and whether the prospect of outside inspection might prove an incentive to diligent performance, are matters of opinion.

No doubt many scientists base their dislike of the Kennedy legislation on a natural distrust of the regulatory bureaucracy, but there may be another impulse behind the charges that a federal commission would be "unpredictable" as well as "unwieldy" and "unworkable." The process of writing guidelines for recombinant DNA research was a disillusioning experience for many of the molecular biologists who participated. Despite the high ideals of self-regulation espoused at Asilomar, the profession was not really prepared to delay the progress of gene-splicing work long enough to gather data that could have pinpointed the actual degree and kinds of hazard it presented. Instead, and despite the belief of many critics that a more broadly constituted committee with a wider range of scientific experience and less immediate interest in promoting the research could have done the job better, the guideline writers pushed ahead and designed a complicated two-tiered system of physical and biological containment based on a largely hypothetical gradation of risks.

As it is, various aspects of the guidelines may be unnecessarily restrictive, as some researchers now contend. On the other hand, they may be quite inadequate, since many troublesome questions, medical and environmental, were never extensively investigated. No one knows for sure. And along the way the process of designing the guidelines became politicized, with some members of the committee developing the cynical attitude that the guidelines mattered less in themselves than as a tool for calming public fears. Because the protections created by the guidelines are based to a significant degree on educated guesswork, it is not surprising that the scientists dislike the idea of turning interpretation and implementation over to the government.

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Scientists in the last few years have come to realize that their definition of acceptable risk is not necessarily the same as that of the general public, not to mention that of legislators, lawyers and insurance companies. The recent announcement that Litton Industries has decided to withdraw from a recombinant DNA research program due to insurance problems suggests that the last group may be the hardest to convince, but the communications gap extends to other segments of society as well. Thus, when the Nobel Prize-winning discoverer of DNA, Dr. James D. Watson, says, as he did recently in *The New Republic*, that "the danger we face from acquiring a little cancer virus DNA must be negligible," he is making an inference, not citing a proven fact. In his view, slowing down exciting and potentially useful research would be such a painful impediment that the burden of proof should be on those who claim that the research is dangerous. Watson has never been one to understate his case and the majority of scientists take a more conservative stance. Elsewhere, the assumption that contemporary research by its very nature involves an unknown, and therefore an unquantifiable, degree of risk, is pervasive if not so clearly stated. The dramatic successes of molecular biology in the postwar period have surrounded it with an aura of confidence and glamour, and it follows that risk assessment has generally been looked upon as a not very stimulating or rewarding detour.

Typical of recent comments on the risks of gene splicing is the statement from Dr. Clifford Grobstein of the University of California, San Diego, that "Continued caution is indicated. The new estimates, however, bring the risk of recombinant DNA research down from unprecedented to well within the range of past experience. American medical science and public health deal remarkably well with the hazards of research with known pathogens." Of course it is the equation of recombinant organisms with known pathogens that is controversial in this statement. Historically, the American public has not found the risks of biological experimentation to be threatening, and the aims and benefits of biomedical research have commanded wide approval. There are, to be sure, some indications that the unprecedented respect accorded medical science is now eroding for reasons that have nothing to do with recombinant DNA. But the substantive question here is whether the proliferation of powerful tools for altering as well as studying genetic material will profoundly change the cost/benefit balance of such research. The scientists, to their credit, were the first to warn that it might. The impact of these warnings on their own research projects, and indeed on their own careers, has just begun to hit home. And mistrust of regulation has increasingly spurred molecular biologists to behave like a pressure group whose vital interests are at stake.

This development presents laymen with a dilemma. The problems of interpreting the Falmouth workshop's findings or Roy Curtiss's letter lie in our lack of information and our own limitations when it comes to making judgments about the complex scientific data. Now there is some reason to believe that the presentation of the technical arguments pro and con is in itself taking on a deliberate public relations aspect. One example of this could be drawn from the meeting of an NIH enteric bacteria subcommittee which was held on August 17, 1976. According to an unofficial transcript of this session made by one of the participants, the discussion turned on various kinds of experimental programs which might be designed expressly for the purpose of reassuring the general public.

Here's how one of the scientists present defined the problem: "It seems to me, there are two kinds of experiments that you can think about. One kind of experiment involves learning something about what's going on and those experiments are the standard sort of thing we are interested in. The second, it seems to me, is a class of experiments whose aim is to convince people that some of their worst fears don't happen very easily. Now, one experiment in the latter case that I would argue is definitely worthwhile doing is to try every way you can, germ-free or otherwise, to make an epidemic or serious disease of cloned DNA. Just try to do it. I agree that it makes no sense. Just titer the survival of mice that have been injected with this material and do that for a while and say, 'Look, there is an epidemic' and the experiment gets published in *The New York Times*, not in the *Journal of Molecular Biology*. That's what ought to be done, that kind of thing. A kind of thing that will never live to be a famous experiment in the history of science; it's like all the other experiments that end up in the front of *The New York Times*. It's something that captures the imagination of reporters. I would argue as strongly as possible that, in the short term, that's what's needed."

The scientists went on to enumerate various kinds of experiments—some of them precisely the questionably dangerous sort that the guidelines were originally intended to ban or discourage. Some individuals considered such experiments desirable not, in large part, because of their inherent value but because they would be dramatic enough to get publicity and ultimately to reassure the public that the risks of gene-splicing work will be containable. Their attitude, apparently, was that the hard scientific answers, when they are arrived at, would not reveal any unacceptable dangers; thus as scientists they would be justified in constructing experiments which would confirm their confidence in advance. For example, in talking about experiments designed to demonstrate the colonization rate of E. Coli strains in laboratory animals, the scientists admitted to one another that they were not sure what a meaningful colonization rate would be. "Four times. Some arbitrary number. Ten times what you put in. That's colonization!" said one scientist impatiently. And one rather more complicated risk assessment project was ruled out because, as one participant summarized it, "If we want to get these experiments done so we can go about our work quickly, maybe we shouldn't introduce problems of this level."

If Roy Curtiss and some of his colleagues are correct and gene-slicing research turns out to be "not so dangerous after all," we will all breathe a sigh of relief. But, whatever the result, this will be far from the last problem raised by the genetic research revolution. That is why the terms of the current recombinant DNA debate are particularly unfortunate. Advocates of caution, laymen

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and specialists alike, who suggest that the desire on the part of the molecular biologists to "go about our work quickly" might not be all-important, find themselves charged with "Lysenkoism," the implication being that they would tolerate government interference in the direction of scientific inquiry. James Watson, who in the past has strongly urged public dialogue on the practical consequences of genetic research, is the first to denounce such dialogue as "hysteria" when it takes a turn he personally considers unfortunate. Reputable and no doubt well-meaning researchers find themselves concocting experiments as a propaganda exercise. And if the public comes to suspect that the experts are not so neutral after all, that it is being allowed to read only about findings "whose aim is to convince people" and about experiments deemed fit to print in *The New York Times*, loose prophecies of an anti-science backlash could turn out to be self-fulfilling. □

LOFTY RHETORIC AND BUSINESS INTERESTS

The Real Latin American Policy

ALAN HOWARD

For most of this century, the United States has managed to keep the countries of Latin America lined up behind its extra-hemispheric policies. This tremendous source of strength now appears to be threatened—a situation that some historians find not unlike the one that prevailed before World War II and prompted the Good Neighbor Policy. The problem is focusing attention once again, as in the early years of the Alliance for Progress, on the policy of the U.S. Government toward its 350 million neighbors to the south. Much of the discussion centers on human rights, and whether pronouncements on the subject by the new administration are doing anything for the people of the countries at which they are ostensibly aimed. This discussion, unfortunately, has added little to an understanding of our Latin American policy, for it has isolated a single moral issue from broader objectives, both national and international.

"We are on the verge of a new period of re-engagement with Latin America," asserted a State Department official, one of the few key policy makers on Latin America to be kept on from the previous administration. "We are passing out of a long period of paralysis. It is difficult for anyone outside the government to appreciate just how frozen foreign policy was throughout Vietnam and Watergate, as a result of the internal crises they created. There are profoundly different attitudes today."

These new attitudes have been gestating for years, both within and outside of government, among that relatively small circle of academicians, bureaucrats and corporate executives who, because of their practical experience and political connections, exert a great deal of influence on our Latin American policy, no matter which party controls the Presidency. At his August 23rd press conference, President Carter acknowledged that "In some areas of foreign policy there is a complete continuum as Presidents change"; he singled out Panama as a case in point.

Panama is important not only for its obvious symbolic and intrinsic value but also because the chief negotiator of the new Canal treaties, along with Ellsworth Bunker, was Sol Linowitz. A former ambassador to the OAS and a senior partner of Coudert Brothers, Linowitz probably has more to say about the shape of our Latin American policy than anyone in the administration except the President himself. For most of the ideas that guide that policy were formulated last December by the Commission on United States-Latin American Relations, of which Linowitz was chairman. The commission, a private group sponsored by the Center for Inter-American Relations, issued last December a report, "The United States and Latin America: Next Steps," commonly referred to as the Linowitz Report.

A cross-check of the commission's members and staff, with Carter's Cabinet-level and key sub-Cabinet appointments, beginning with Treasury Secretary Blumenthal, indicates that "Next Steps" is not just another think-tank document to be stored away for future reference. Commission members and staff now operate at critical levels of the Treasury Department and National Security Council, and to a lesser extent in the State Department. They are intent on seeing the perspectives of the commission translated into governmental policy.

"It's fairly obvious that the Linowitz Report in opposition is now more or less the accepted wisdom," notes Abraham Lowenthal, himself a consultant on the report and the former director of studies for the Council on Foreign Relations.

The central thrust of the Linowitz Report is that Latin America has developed a degree of independence from the United States. It cites not only the obvious case of Socialist Cuba but also, and chiefly, the many "pro-U.S." governments which, despite extensive economic ties to this country, no longer fall automatically into the U.S. camp on a whole range of international issues that are vitally important to U.S. foreign policy. Some manifestations of this independence have been well publicized, like Mexico's vote on the Zionism resolution at the United Nations and Brazil's speedy recognition of the Angolan Government. Some other instances hit even closer to home, like a recent editorial in the Buenos Aires pro-government daily *La Nacion* which condemned Carter's decision on the neutron bomb as reflecting a "mentality lacking even minimal humanitarian feeling."

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Confronted with the demand of the developing world for a new international economic order, with increased competition from its capitalist allies, and with the historic threat of Socialist revolutions, the U.S. Government, says the report, has taken the election of President Carter as a signal to recover crucial ground lost during the debacles of Vietnam and Watergate, particularly in relationship to the enormous resources and growing markets of the Third World. The report continues:

> Among the most powerful and prosperous countries of the Third World, several key Latin American nations will significantly influence how the international economic order evolves. . . . The primary aim of U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere should be to work with Latin American countries in dealing with this broad global agenda. The U.S. can no longer presume, however, that Latin American cooperation will be extended simply because of U.S. dominance or because of special regional ties or bonds of traditional friendship. To help win the cooperation of countries of Latin America, the new administration should clearly reject outmoded policies based on domination and paternalism. . . . This Commission believes that the new administration should begin by resisting the temptation to speak of "regional community" or "special relationship."

The extent to which the Carter administration has adopted this strategy can be seen in the remarks made by Terence Todman, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, at a media seminar in Washington on July 21:

> The United States has changed its basic approach to Latin America and the Caribbean. When President Carter spoke before the Permanent Council of the OAS in April, he did not just talk about Latin America. He outlined our overall global policy directions, and he pledged to consult closely with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean in developing our policies. We have discarded the outworn paternalism of a parochial special relationship that usually meant we took our relations for granted and as an afterthought.

In specific terms, the "most urgent issue" on the Linowitz agenda was Panama, for all the reasons the administration is now advancing in its impending battle to have the treaties ratified. Other issues dealt with in the Linowitz Report and targeted by President Carter as policy objectives are: the "moral imperative for our government to attempt to alleviate the suffering caused by the suppression of basic human rights"; a move toward normal relations with Cuba; the reduction of arms transfers and nuclear proliferation; financial assistance and liberalization of trade policies with an eye toward the objectives of the developing nations, particularly in the context of North-South relations; and the old requisite of improved communications and cultural exchange.

While few people in Washington like the comparison, there are elements of the "new approach" that recall the Alliance for Progress, with its lofty rhetoric about support for national sovereignty, political democracy and economic development. The experts are still arguing over what shattered the illusions of the Alliance, but one finds, both then and now, a dangerously abstract and typically liberal assumption about the formulation of policy, illustrated for example in the remark by Arthur Schlesinger jr. that the counterinsurgency program developed under Kennedy, and carried out in close coordination with the economic and social programs of the Alliance was "a great blind spot" on the New Frontier.

The phrase suggests an anomaly, a defective gene in an otherwise sound body of policy. But the counterinsurgency program was—and is—an integral part of U.S. policy toward the Third World, a fact that has been documented so thoroughly that one touches upon it again only because, when a man of Mr. Schlesinger's learning and sophistication isolates it as an unfortunate "blind spot," it is a sure sign that its central position in U.S. policy toward Latin America is still not appreciated. The counterinsurgency program, with all its civilian dimensions as well, was devised and implemented by men in the Pentagon, CIA, State Department and other reaches of the federal bureaucracy just as zealous in their defense of "liberty" as were the more illustrious knights of Camelot. While they miscalculated the strength of their enemy in Vietnam, their policies have been, by certain standards, much more effective in Latin America.

If there is a great blind spot in the "new approach" to our Latin American policy, it is the failure to repudiate the specific policies that flowed from that supposedly outmoded attitude of domination and paternalism. The few attempts to do so have been notable mainly for their devastating failure, as in the highly publicized case of Brady Tyson's "apology" in Geneva for U.S. intervention against the Allende government in Chile. But such skirmishes go on regularly within the administration with the new people, and particularly the younger people whom Carter brought into the White House beginning to feel the power of the *permanent* government's predisposition toward the defense of capitalist interests around the world, regardless of the human consequences, and its stake in justifying past policies that it helped to formulate.

The "new crowd" has already ceded valuable ground by failing to come to grips with the legacy of counterrevolution throughout the continent that the administration inherited. While Schlesinger calls it an accident, the Linowitz Report notes its consequences as "a plague of repression" but virtually ignores the political process within the U.S. Government that created it. If anything, it notes, with a kind of unconscious approval, that the suppression of Latin American revolutionary movements and destruction of democratic institutions over the past decade offers our government now an opportunity for policy initiatives without the distractions of the earlier period:

> Except possibly in Panama, no imminent threats to U.S. "National Security," military or economic, are likely to be posed or perceived in the Americas. The sense of urgency with which the Kennedy administration viewed Latin America and the Caribbean in 1961, and the alarm voiced by Governor Rockefeller after his study mission in 1969, are not likely to be repeated in 1977.

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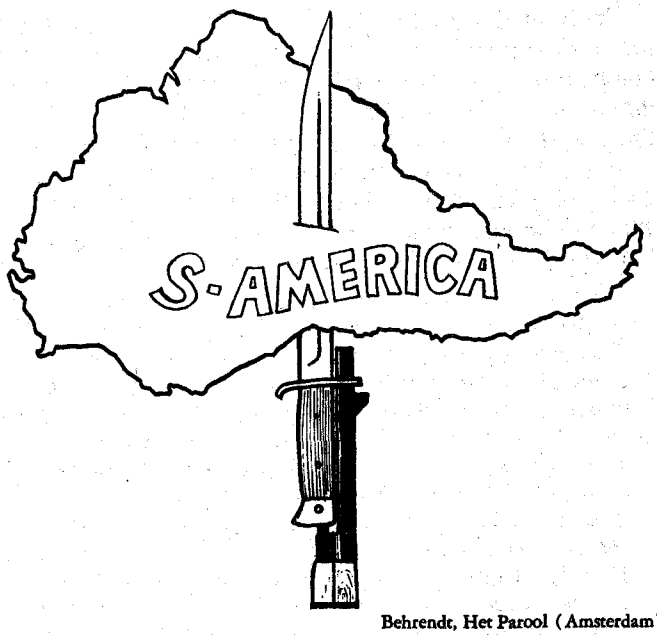
Even before Carter took office, this idea had found expression within the government. Testifying before Congress in August 1976, then Assistant Secretary of State William D. Rogers (himself a member of the Linowitz panel before his appointment) noted succinctly: "We have moved beyond the earlier preoccupations with security to a new era of economic cooperation and joint effort."

During the 1960s, "economic cooperation" in the context of Latin American relations meant pouring billions of dollars in U.S. public funds into strategic countries to sustain our political allies against their left-wing oppositions and to facilitate the penetration of local markets by U.S. capital. Ironically, the growth of capitalist sectors and interest groups, particularly in the more industrialized nations of Latin America, now provides the economic base for the enhanced bargaining power of local elites when they face the once-almighty, U.S.-based transnational corporations. This new degree of independence is relative, to be sure—it might better be called a lessened degree of dependence—but it is sufficient to provoke the type of rethinking by U.S. business interests that is reflected in the Linowitz Report and the Carter policies.

Both businessmen and government officials are touchy on the subject of business influence on U.S. policy. It is not unusual for an official of a large bank with a multibillion-dollar investment in Latin America to say, "we react nonpolitically" to events in Latin America, or for a State Department official to assure you that the big corporations "have given up on trying to influence the U.S. Government." But it is absurd, and an insult to the intelligence of the American people, to suggest that corporations which do $30 billion a year in trade with Latin America and which have $16 billion in direct investments there, along with banks that have outstanding approximately $25 billion in loans to the region, do not have a hand in shaping the policy of the U.S. Government toward Latin America.

The dramatic increase and diversification of U.S. investments in Latin America after World War II (U.S. subsidiaries now account for 14 percent of the region's GNP) compelled Washington to devise new policies that might reconcile the increasingly complex and often conflicting interests among different companies and types of operations, and prevent the political maneuverings of a single company from jeopardizing the holdings of many others. This trend toward the construction of a cohesive policy was accelerated by the Cuban Revolution and culminated in the Alliance for Progress.

Against those who argue that the Alliance was just another tactic of U.S. imperialism to enhance its economic and political domination over the region, defenders of the Alliance like to point out that U.S. business interests had little to do with its formulation, and that few gave it meaningful support during its brief and checkered life. What this defense fails to consider—and the point is vital to identifying the limits of Washington's latest initiatives—is that business interests and their allies in the bureaucracy were more than willing that certain aspects of Alliance-related policy should



Behrendt, Het Parool (Amsterdam)

be implemented, as noted earlier in the case of counter-insurgency. They also endorsed the spending of billions of public dollars for roads, utilities and other works designed to build an infrastructure that would improve the prospects for U.S. investments. These funds were in effect subsidies that encouraged U.S. firms to locate in Latin America; they also stimulated U.S. exports through "tied" aid agreements. There is more than circumstantial evidence that those aspects of Alliance policy that were implemented were precisely those that the business community and their allies in the government at least passively supported. And it is similarly evident that the aspects which failed—like the development of democratic political institutions and a more equitable distribution of wealth—were those in conflict with transnational capital's need to operate profitably.

A similar dynamic is beginning to develop around Washington's latest policy initiatives. Business interests have not been involved in day-to-day application of this new approach, in the sense, for example, that they participated in the strangulation of the Chilean economy under Allende. This is not surprising; business interests rarely mobilize at the political level unless they fear a direct and immediate effect on their operations—circumstances that usually coincide with political crises. But they have clearly begun to promote some aspects of the new policy, while ignoring or sabotaging others.

There are many examples, for instance, of high-level business support for the new Panama Canal treaties [see "Face-Off in Panama: U.S. Imperialists, Old and New" by Penny Lernoux, *The Nation,* April 3, 1976], and as this support becomes more visible and better organized it will substantially affect the outcome in Congress. The White House is only now scurrying about the country, drumming up support for the treaties, but for at least two years the Council of the Americas, an organization whose members include corporations that account for probably more than 90 percent of U.S. investments in Latin America, has been hard at work pre-

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paring educational materials and programs about the Canal and the necessity of a new treaty.

These corporations are eager to improve the image of the United States in Latin America, for they are increasingly pressed by European and Japanese competition, and by nationalist measures that limit operations and the amount of profits that can be taken out of a country. U.S. trade with, and investment in, Latin America, while growing in absolute terms, has suffered a relative decline over the past decade. To get an idea of the pace of this change, between 1971 and 1975 Japanese investment in Brazil increased 495 percent, Swiss 231 percent and U.S. 97 percent. "As many of these investments require modern technology," explained Capt. John W. Clark, president of Delta Steamship Co. and vice chairman of the Council of the Americas, in expressing the anxieties of many of his colleagues, "U.S. suppliers are finding export markets declining due to non-traditional competition."

Most of the economic measures called for in the Linowitz Report, like promoting the export of manufactured goods from Latin American countries, coincide nicely with the interests of many large U.S. transnational corporations. U.S. subsidiaries, for instance, control 41 percent of the manufactured goods that Latin America exports. This is clearly a case of policy catching up with slow but profound shifts in the structure of international capital.

Probably the most dramatic change in the pattern of U.S. investments in the region is the growing role of private banks. In the days of the Alliance for Progress, private banks accounted for less than a third of the U.S. loans made to Latin America; the bulk of the funds came from government agencies. Today, private banks account for around 55 percent. The huge debts acquired by Latin American countries due to balance of payment deficits (oil is a large but not the only factor) along with the sluggishness of the U.S. economy, have prompted U.S. banks to extend loans to Latin American countries at a staggering rate. In the past decade, the external debt of the region has quadrupled to more than $40 billion (owed to commercial banks), of which more than half is owed to private U.S. banks.

Defending this unprecedented and risky commitment, Citicorp Chairman Walter Wriston recently told a group of United Nations ambassadors: "The drumfire of criticism of loans to, and investments in, developing countries is a far cry from the genuine excitement which greeted President Kennedy's announcement of the Alliance for Progress. It was only yesterday when our government was urging the private sector to lend to, and invest in, the developing world. Our present climate of accusatory investigation is apparently designed to prove that we did in fact heed President Kennedy's words."

When they explain what they term the creative and legitimate role of foreign bank capital in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) in general, and Latin America in particular, Mr. Wriston and other bankers tend to mute two by-products of this recent turn of events: the extraordinary profits to be made in such operations, and the type of political regime that the terms of such loans tend to impose upon the the hapless recipients.

In the case of Citicorp last year, for example, its investments in South America (excluding the Caribbean) produced 20 percent of its worldwide profits (compared to 28 percent from the United States and 22 percent from Europe) on just 6 percent of the company's assets. These remarkable returns on most commercial bank operations in Latin America are directly related to the lamented "plague of repression" throughout the continent, for such repression and the installation of military regimes to organize it have been necessary to carry out policies which the banks demand, but which civilian politicians, more sensitive and vulnerable to popular pressures, were incapable of enforcing. And the bankers do not seem particularly upset by what has happened.

"Today more than at any other time since the end of World War II there is political stability and support for economic development plans," explained one financial officer with long years of experience in Latin America. "It's not a question of whether or not you like their type of government, but whether or not they have good economic managers. He named some countries under "good economic management"—Brazil after 1964; the new military government in Argentina; Chile, which "has risen from the ashes," as he put it almost too accurately, and Bolivia.

Bankers and corporate executives tend to regard the policy pronouncements coming these days out of Washington with a certain disdain. "They really have no effect on our operations," said one. "We watch what happens in a particular country, rather than what Washington happens to be saying. The policies of the Carter administration, human rights and all that, have had no impact that we can measure in the countries where we operate, which includes most of the Latin American nations."

A new relationship could be developing between the great transnational corporations and banks and the formulation of U.S. policy. For at the level of those sweeping economic and social policies of a nation that can determine the destiny of entire generations, the banks and corporations exert more influence in the lives of Latin Americans than the government of the United States could ever dream of bringing to bear. By diversifying and extending their investments, the banks and corporations have broadened their base of contact and support within Latin America and can work more effectively through the newly created institutions of those countries than in the Washington labyrinth. Besides, in Washington certain inconveniences crop up that are not met with in the Latin American operations—opposition from labor unions, for instance, or domestically based companies hit hard by imports produced under the wage restrictions of military rule, or human rights activists who perversely insist in believing that those rights are more important than anyone's financial gains.

The very survival of the transnational banks may now depend on the ability—and willingness—of a few dozen LDCs to keep up their debt service payments. Therefore, to assure the flow of those funds the banks are participating ever more directly in the political affairs of those nations, by-passing not only the U.S. Government but

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also the multilateral lending institutions that until now have insulated the commercial banks from overt political involvement.

Speaking of a recent $220 million loan to Peru by a group of U.S. banks, Daniel O. Beim, executive vice president of the Export-Import Bank, said that it "was accompanied by a side letter setting down the policy understanding on which the loan was granted, including periodic reporting on economic progress. The arrangement broke new ground in the field of LDC lending. Not in recent memory had the banks been so fully drawn into the policy-making process within an LDC.

The economic program the banks imposed on the Peruvian Government raised prices on transportation, utilities and other basic goods and services while holding down wages. These measures set off riots throughout the country and created a national crisis which, for the moment, has been resolved in favor of the banks' program.

The deepening involvement of bankers and corporate executives in the political affairs of countries where they operate has created among these men attitudes of the sort that used to be associated with foreign service officers who had spent too much time in a particular country or region of the world. While superficially neutral toward the political character of the local government, they are deeply sympathetic toward the military regimes that have seized power—not because they are military regimes but because they are prepared to get what foreign capital demands out of the hides of the people.

These executives and their Washington operatives tend to become advocates for their host countries in dealing with the U.S. Government. So, for example, instead of reinforcing the Washington line on human rights, they tend to appear as apologists for their adopted countries. "I think our government has to realize that those countries are at war, combating terrorism, and that many of the requests we are making are not realistic," said one banker. Such observations are usually followed with some version of the argument that the countries in question are not ready for democracy anyway. Within this elite sector of American society there are honorable and even courageous men, but within the institutions they serve there is no effective way to measure the impact of human rights and political democracy on the balance sheet; to the extent they can be measured, they tend to show up on the debit side of the ledger.

Therefore, the extravagant hopes raised throughout the continent, and within this country, by Carter's promise to promote human rights must be tempered by an understanding of these economic relationships. The administration claims that its policies have improved the situation; it cites fewer reports of torture and disappearances, and the announcement by a number of military regimes that they plan to return their countries to civilian rule. Some of this improvement is difficult to verify, but the citing of "Newspeak" pronouncements out of Santiago, Buenos Aires, Montevideo and other capitals in the past few months as evidence of improvement makes it difficult to take the human rights policy seriously, or at least take it the way the administration hands it out.

A quick sampling of those announcements makes the point. Sometime after 1990 Chile and Argentina may return to civilian government. The Argentine junta was quite precise about the nature of the "New Republic" to be established, in which "individual freedom, free enterprise, private property and the right of the individual as a superior creature" would reign supreme, but the junta was vague as to the process by which "political groups would be incorporated into the governmental process." The Chilean junta, on the other hand, devised an elaborate plan of gradual stages leading to civilian rule by 1985—which date, however, may be delayed due to "egoism and personal ambition" or "internal political agitation or external attacks that could threaten national security." And in Montevideo shortly after even vaguer pronouncements were made, the government issued an executive decree that eliminated the last vestige of independence in the judiciary system and placed it totally under military authority.

In return for these and other "concessions" on human rights, the U.S. Government has adopted an attitude toward the military dictatorships of Latin America that they regard as quite satisfactory. While much stress has been placed on the initial confusion and hostile reaction of some of the countries, the fact is that the cooler heads have prevailed. The basic structure of our ties to these regimes has been reaffirmed, even down to such significant details as Kissinger's "memorandum of understanding" with Brazil, which assigned a role of special importance to that country in our relations with Latin America as a whole. And when the Brazilian Foreign Minister was asked to comment recently on relations with the United States, he chose to mention the letter from Secretary of State Vance affirming this special relationship, not the human rights issue. And on our side, the recent dissolution of the Brazilian Congress, which had became a nuisance to the military authorities, was taken in stride by the State Department.

Mexico's former Foreign Minister, Emilio Rabasa, has called the recent OAS resolution on human rights—much hailed in Washington—"a useless gesture, since it can't be enforced," and characterized Carter's campaign as a "political ploy," its real targets being U.S. and international public opinion. The Argentines, who are angry with Washington for refusing to accept their terrorism formula at the recent OAS meeting (it would have officially justified Argentina's violation of human rights), accused the United States of forcing an issue that dealt with its world strategy while ignoring real questions of development.

There is some truth in these remarks. When the administration talks about human rights in Latin America it is not oblivious to the impact of this talk—and a few related actions—on the current Belgrade Conference and on the attitude of the American people to their country's international posture. A key administration source recently told a group of reporters in Washington that human rights has involved the American people in the world again and given them a mission; it is a theme echoed regularly in the mass media. "After the guilt-ridden defeat in Vietnam and the shocks of Watergate," *Time* could intone in a recent analysis of U.S. foreign

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policy, "Carter has given many Americans a renewed feeling that they are standing for something good in the world."

When State Department spokesman Hodding Carter was asked if it were true that various U.S. Ambassadors in Latin America were privately assuring local officials not to worry about all the human rights talk in Washington, that it was really just a device for internal political consumption, he quite frankly replied that this was a problem and that "we are trying to deal with it."

So the American people may be forgiven if they reserve a degree of skepticism about precisely what the United States stands for in Latin America. The desperate condition of the dispossessed masses of Latin America, which created such alarm in Washington not so long ago, has not been appreciably altered, nor has the relationship of the United States to that condition. In the opinion of Raul Prebisch, the widely respected Argentine economist whose ideas were an important source of inspiration for the Alliance for Progress, the United States and other centers of international capital continue to "contribute to the tendency of peripheral capitalism to exclude the great mass of the population, which is left on the sidelines of development." And Prebisch adds, "what is good for the consumer society is not necessarily good for development."

Among the "new crowd" that has entered the administration, and a few old-timers, there are men and women who understand this, who sincerely identify with the aspirations of the common people of Latin America, and who are disgusted by U.S. complicity in, and responsibility for, the political brutality that prevails on the continent. Their presence in the government has been a major factor in the sporadic and marginal easing of repression that has occurred in some countries, but the forces aligned against them have been steadily chipping away at their authority and effect on policy.

The real test of our sincerity will come when events in Latin America challenge the cherished assumption of our policy makers that the status quo has been stabilized, and that the revolutionary currents of the 1960s have played themselves out. Dictatorships that defend the privileges of an elite against impoverished masses of people have always been able to smother political life for a time—and usually the longer that period, the more explosive its termination. It would be interesting to speculate on how, when, and where such an event might occur, but that is not necessary. It is enough to say that such an explosion would indeed provoke a definitive resolution of the contradictions embedded in our current policy. It would force our government and people to come to grips with the conflict between the values of cooperation, political freedom and human dignity projected in that policy, and the political conditions dictated by an economic system that some transnational entrepreneurs and the banks that abet them assume will go on forever. What one would like to say, even to hope, is that the United States, both its policy makers and its people, may come to see the truth before it blows up in their faces. □

ART IN PRISON

'A WAY OUT OF THE SEWER'

GAYLE E. WOOD

Getting art into and out of this country's prisons is sometimes an art in itself. Since the turn of the century, prison arts programs have existed in one form or another—as recreation, social service or therapy. But it was only six years ago that such programs received federal backing from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which began then to sponsor such individual prison programs as "The Family," a successful New York-based theatre group that performs internationally.

The real boost for prison arts programs came, however, in 1975 when NEA's Expansion Arts Department, in conjunction with the Bureau of Prisons, funded a pilot artists-in-residence program at three United States prisons (Lompoc, Calif., Leavenworth, Kan. and Tallahassee, Fla.). In 1976, this joint program sponsored five inmate artists-in-residence. The bureau, which rarely shells out any money for prison art, this time contributed half of the $112,500 required to launch the programs. From Sing Sing in New York to Terminal Island in California, art, literature and music by and for inmates broke through the ice of institutional routine. But prison arts have come to mean different things to different people.

Tom O'Connor, ex-inmate of Auburn Prison and now executive director of the Prison Reform Task Force (PRTF), said: "If the Department of Correction used inmate talent and permitted it to flourish, there'd be less recidivism. I never really painted until I went to jail. I literally used house paint, and then had a friend steal me some from the paint shop." O'Connor's Manhattan apartment is nearly a gallery, displaying twenty-seven prison art pieces. Nine years ago, when he was serving time, he was considered a troublemaker: "I lived my whole bid that way. Painting was therapeutic; I could get lost in it for a little while; it was an escape."

Was that all? "Listen, the tension was so thick in there that the chance of violent confrontation existed all the time. Art was a necessary escape. It maintained sanity." O'Connor adds that now it helps him look back at the paintings he did, since they reflected feelings and attitudes during prison days. On a larger scale, he has noticed that, in 1975, when prisons across the country were relatively quiet, prison art was full of sex and violence; and that in 1976, when prisons were in tur-

Gayle Wood, formerly of the Village Voice *editorial staff, is a free-lance journalist who won an honorable mention in New York's Big Apple Poetry Contest this year.*

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moil, the art work was primarily pastoral, serene and without sex.

Susan Jimison, program director for Hospital Audiences, Inc. (HAI), one of many foundations sponsoring prison arts, agrees with O'Connor: "If you could see the dead faces that enter these programs that walk out alive, you'd know how important they are."

But the notion of prison art faces many problems. New York, with more than a score of correctional facilities containing 20,000 people, typifies the successes and failures of such programs across the nation.

An overweight guard at the security station of the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility stood by the metal detector, rummaging through the purse of Adrienne Rich, one of the country's most highly regarded poets. The reading she was there to give, arranged by veteran prison volunteers Carol Muske and Ginnie McKenzie some two weeks earlier, was delayed an hour, poorly publicized and poorly attended. In fact, of the 150 inmates at the prison, only six gathered in Room 11 to hear Ms. Rich. Nonetheless, for her and for those who attended, it was worth the trouble.

The trouble was that Mr. Wade, a kindly black man with a space between his teeth, couldn't get Ms. Brooks, in charge of volunteer programs, to come down to the office; and Mr. Salken, campus director, thought he had better things to worry about than some poetry reading. So, because of the delay and lack of publicity, many inmates who might have come, did not bother or could not get passes. "When you start, it looks fine—civilized," Ms. McKenzie says. "But it gets worse; it's just normal prison hassles. It's always difficult. Always."

A prison, among other things, can be a vast vacuum. The atmosphere at Bedford Hills is a cross between the monotony of routine and the electric tension such monotony breeds. When someone like Ardrienne Rich shows up, the inmates get a chance to be informed and entertained, as well as to express themselves. (Ms. Rich, for example, gave practical suggestions to her audience: ". . . Keep a journal of your experiences, no matter how dull they seem to you . . . revise your work. . . ." She elaborated on new literary trends and answered questions.) Inmate response was heartening; everyone was broadened.

Not everyone, however, sees it that way. Administrators often take one of two stands toward prison arts—either the programs are extraneous luxuries or they are dangerous to prison life. Prison art, it is true, reflects prison life. Educated inmates are "troublemakers." They attract entirely too much attention to the frequently unorganized, apathetic and stubborn institutions in which they have been confined. Inmates who are artists convey rather too clearly how bungled, lazy, wasteful and superfluous the jobs and workings of our prisons can be. As a consequence, the programs create *Catch-22* problems: the more successful an arts program is in terms of inmate enthusiasm and accomplishment, the more it attracts administrative disapproval. Nothing momentous is needed in the way of hostility—an endless series of small, bureaucratic obstacles will do the trick.

That kind of sabotage is well illustrated in another area of inmate education. Publishers often contribute their damaged books to prisons, but the road from publisher to inmate is long and the mishaps can be many. Books may be declined because of alleged lack of storage space. Or, they may be accepted and stored, but the closets locked and the keys misplaced. Or, if prisoners are told of the books' availability at all, there may be some problem about procuring the pass needed to borrow them. Some books are censored by some administrators, and that, of course, takes time. When an administration doesn't feel like cooperating, the red tape unwinds endlessly for the simplest of privileges.

"There is often a big discrepancy between what is said and what actually happens with prison arts," says Jane Kleinsinger, prison program coordinator for HAI. "Administrators can form a bureaucratic obstacle course. Then, too, prisoners can be a depressed and demanding audience. Workshops do better than performances—inmates can attend some but not all and still benefit. This is especially true at a place like Rikers Island Prison, where inmates are of necessity transient."

There are nine detention facilities at Rikers, and an inmate's average stay is sixty days, though some await trial for from three months to three years. When a prisoner moves from one prison to another, he falls into a different classification, and that can eliminate him from certain programs. (Ms. Kleinsinger cites one case in which an inmate had to leave behind his half-finished painting, to be completed by an incoming inmate with the proper classification.)

"Prison types are hard to work with—they're suspicious," Ms. Jimison adds. "Individual wardens can make or break a program. The staff at any prison is a reflection of its warden. And correction officers are incarcerated people too—even the good people get fed up."

Nothing worthwhile is easy. But arts programs seem to have more than their share of difficulties. At the conference in June of the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, a controversial topic was the faulty communication between artistic and administrative minds—particularly as reflected in the selection of leaders for prison workshops. The artists contend that volunteers worked best, mainly because "they don't dirty their hands with salaries." The administrative attitude was more pragmatic. Everyone agreed, however, that the programs needed statistical proof of success, especially with reference to recidivism.

"As it is, we've so far been taken on faith. We need an index on which to base our success. Artists may be more humanistic than administrators," says Ms. Jimison, "but they also tend to take a self-congratulatory stance and create a questionable other-worldiness. We need statistics."

Money makes the wheels go round, in prison or out. For HAI, the primary source has been the New York City Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), which supplies $100,000 annually. This is "seed money," to get art programs started, but not to maintain them indefinitely. The National Endowment for the Arts throws in $10,000 a year for workshops in federal prisons.

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Three years is the maximum time that CJCC gives a program to prove itself. HAI will receive funds until this November, after which the Department of Corrections will be asked for support. However, the department has fiscal problems of its own, and Ms. Kleinsinger doubts that money will be available there. Ironically, HAI is coordinating the first national conference of Arts and Humanities in the Correctional Setting to be held in New York in March of 1978—at which time HAI could be defunct. Even if HAI were to reorganize and apply to CJCC as a new program, the waiting list for council support is prohibitively long.

After the 1970 disruptions throughout New York City institutions and the much-publicized riots at the Manhattan House of Detention (the Tombs), the New York Society for Ethical Culture initiated the Prison Reform Task Force to serve as liaison between inmates and officials. Each November the task force sponsors a national program, "Art from Inside," in which prisoners' work is exhibited and sold. All proceeds go to the prisoner-artist (not always the case elsewhere).

"The purpose of the exhibit [450 to 600 paintings] is to show that prisoners are not animals but sensitive people. Art becomes a vehicle for prison reform, because it depicts prison life as it really is, not how we wish it was," Tom O'Connor says. This year the task force will present awards for the best work. It costs PRTF more than $5,000 to sponsor the exhibit.

"No politics, no funding," O'Connor says. "You have to be political. Also, to raise money, we create businesses —we use Operation Greenhouse to sell plants, and now we're preparing a security panel." The panel, to be called "Cops and Cons," will offer security service for homes, businesses, corporations and neighborhoods. In addition, funding is supplemented by public and private contributions.

What about the economics within prisons themselves? Consider the corrections officer: He can make as much as $13,000 a year—approximately the beginning salary of a social worker with a master's degree. Says Ms. Kleinsinger, "Often, the men have climbed down off their tractors and gone to where the money is. If the officers hired were better trained, and better paid, there might be correction in the real sense, not the lock-and-key variety."

It has been estimated that it costs $8,000 to $15,000 per year to maintain one inmate. A more astute accountant might drastically reduce these figures. For example, the manufacture of license plates is one of about forty federal prison industries whose profits go unreported to the public. A prison-made license plate costs approximately 40¢ less than one made in a commercial shop. Multiply that by the 25 million plates required for New York State alone, and the total comes to $10 million. (New York inmates make plates for four other states as well.) And there are thirty-nine other prison industries that run in the black.

Do any of these prison businesses benefit the inmates, whose cheap labor could, at least, support their own arts programs? Why must inmates rely on organizations like HAI and PRTF, whose necessarily hit-or-miss funding keeps everyone guessing? "People are making money on crime. It's the re-creation of slavery," O'Connor says.

> *Even if you were trapped*
> *for 6 months on a 3 a.m.*
> *stench subway car . . in*
> *the most primitive section*
> *of the Bronx . . with left-*
> *over members of the Annual*
> *Street Gang Festival . . . 60*
> *portable radios and Dyn-o*
> *Mite tape decks blasting*
> *7 different soul stations. . . .*

In this poem, "Don't Ask Me What It Was Like," ex-inmate Carol Ramer depicts prison life. The reading was sponsored on June 12 by NoHo Gallery (Manhattan) in coordination with Art Without Walls/Freespace. It featured Ms. Ramer and Juanita Reedy ("I'm given a pancake mattress/on half of a half of a bed"), and included photographs, paintings and artwork by prisoners from all over the state, as well as a video play, *Next Time*, by Carol Muske.

One of the paintings was a watercolor by Green Haven inmate Bruce Jennings. The dark-hued work's main light source was the partly open, barred door, at which a prisoner stared from his cot. It is a painfully chilling and astute work, expressive of what Tom O'Connor calls, "men and women who have warmth of feeling, emotion, sensitivity and imagination." Jennings, according to an article by Steve Bronson in the *Woodstock Times*, "has attended Harvard and was graduated from Syracuse; is serving a life sentence for a nonviolent crime; is incarcerated for the alleged sale of seven grams of cocaine to an undercover agent. This is his first offense." Bronson added that "being an artist in a maximum security prison is painful and trying. Not only is there the oppressive confinement (9′-x-9′ cell) and lack of freedom but just getting the most basic art materials is an incredibly frustrating experience."

David Rothenberg, in his *Fortune News* column (March 1977) repeats Bronson's theme: "I learned that it was illegal and impossible for his poems to be sent to me. While drugs and booze were flowing smoothly in and out of Rikers Island, Stanley Eldridge's poetry was tough to come by. . . ."

Despite overwhelming odds, however, inmate motivation is strong. Why? Robert Dellinger, former Terminal Island inmate and currently a staff member teaching creative writing there, knows why. Arts programs, he says, are "a way out of the sewer" (*The New York Times*, March 6, 1977). Dellinger, who has just finished a novel, is the author of a number of TV scripts.

Clearly, not all inmates are Robert Dellinger, but prison arts programs need to be taken even more seriously by those with the power to implement them, and inmate skills and talents neeed to be encouraged by those who can afford to support them.

In *The House of the Dead*, Dostoevski wrote: "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." Stepping inside an American prison, one might ask just how civilized our country is. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Male Miseries

THE PROFESSOR OF DESIRE. *By Philip Roth. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 263 pp. $8.95.*

PATRICIA MEYER SPACKS

In 1972 Philip Roth published a first-person fictional narrative purportedly written by one David Kepesh, a professor of literature who has suffered transformation into a 6 ft.-2 in. female breast. *The Professor of Desire*, also a first-person account, reports the earlier history of the same Kepesh, from youthful career as Nice Jewish Boy, through disastrous marriage, to prolonged liaison with that ideal Anglo-Saxon woman—sexy, compliant, intelligent but not aggressive—whom all Roth characters seek yet with whom they never find happiness. Even readers unacquainted with the bizarre form of Kepesh's eventual disaster must realize by the end of this somber fiction the inevitability of disaster in *some* form. The relation of body and soul, an obsessive problem for earlier eras, also obsesses Roth, in whose view this inescapable union of opposites defines the hopelessness of human (or at least male) misery: Kepesh's metamorphosis articulates an ultimate stage of that progressive pain.

Roth does not, of course, write about souls but about bodies and their endless needs; and his tone, far from somber, rings with energy. Yet, like *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *The Breast*, and *My Life as a Man* (1974), *The Professor of Desire* constitutes an extended complaint about male plight, a plight finally spiritual although manifested through the physical. All these complaints in their pouring out sound on occasion perilously close to the ludicrous, told in voices whose self-pity seldom obliterates their semi-comic self-awareness: to know one's sufferings ridiculous constitutes heightened suffering.

The grotesqueness of Kepesh's pre-breast anguish derives from its perversity: getting, over and over, exactly what he wants, he sooner or later no longer wants it. Indulged only child of a couple frantically preoccupied with the complexities of running a resort hotel in the Catskills, David takes as his youthful model a professional comic named Herbie Bratasky who charms the guests with his proficiency at the rumba and reserves for private his extraordinary imitation of all the sounds of defecation. Admiration for Herbie transforms itself, by the time David reaches college, into a determination to gratify his lusts with many women, in many ways. For a time his gratification consists mainly in nuzzling the attractive belly of a cheerleader, but a Fulbright year in London, during which he professes his desires ever more openly, brings realization of his wildest fantasies: not one but two obliging Swedish girls. One of them finally makes a gesture toward suicide by way of expressing her lack of real enthusiasm for endless sexual athletics *á trois*; with the other, David travels through Europe, finding cooperative third parties wherever they go, discovering and realizing more and more sexual possibilities. Conscience leads him back to America, to graduate school, to college teaching of literature; his desires, on the other hand, guide him to a glamorous creature, freshly returned from the Far East, who provides new satisfactions in bed but refuses, once they marry, to make the toast or mail the letters. Moreover, she remains fixated on her Hong Kong lover, to whom, finally, she attempts to return.

Kepesh doesn't like her any more, the marriage founders, he moves from West coast to East, suffers impotence, enters psychoanalysis. But soon another wonderful woman appears, beautiful, innocent Claire Ovington, whom David frequently addresses as "Clarissa," presumably with reference to a fictional model of female virtue far less satisfactory, from a male point of view, than she. Claire, too, wishes only to gratify him, with more expansive notions of gratification than the Swedish girls could manage. Reluctant to engage in certain sexual activities, she nonetheless displays her passion extravagantly and offers almost everything else as well: stability, love, order, peace, infinite willingness to please. The novel ends with Kepesh's dawning realization that Almost Everything is not enough: his passion is dwindling, their happiness will diminish, some day in the foreseeable future their relationship must end, he feels "already bereft of my strength and my hope and my contentment."

Such a summary does not point distinctly to problems or to a character worth a second thought. Why bother about the difficulties of a man provided with a gratifying vocation, health, security, love—and the inability to be satisfied? At the novel's end, Kepesh's father brings with him for a visit to David and Claire in their idyllic summer retreat a concentration camp survivor who has lost parents, wife, children, and assorted other relatives to the Nazis. His presence arouses in the protagonist an agonized "fear of transformations yet to come" (little does he know!), as he struggles with his awareness that he will soon lose desire for the lovely woman who loves him. This conjunction between the evils generated by external malignancy and those evoked by the insatiable self measures Roth's novelistic daring. Directly challenging the assumption that the unavoidable psychic pain of an individual merits less attention than the unavoidable pain of the world, he insists that both point to the same ineluctable fact: mortality—enemy of the body, but also, given the absence of religious certitude, of the spirit.

Art alone defies mortality: another ancient idea, here freshly realized. If Roth dares to put the suffering of a spoiled neurotic side by side with the agony of the Jews, he ventures also to hint analogies between his own literary achievement and that of Kafka (presiding presence of *The Breast*) and Chekhov. No living writer could survive such comparison. To remember Chekhov (and this novel even quotes him from time to time) can only make the reader dissatisfied with Roth. Yet one has to recognize as well the genuine continuity of theme and subject between those poignant Russian stories of loss, compromise, incomplete awareness, endured by commonplace men and women, and this new version of middle-class misery, with its explicit recognitions that human fate everywhere and always partakes of pain. Doggedly assembling fragments of often trivial experience into an artistic whole (as Kepesh within the narrative attempts to organize his own life into an autobiographical lecture for his students), Roth implicitly insists that he, like Kafka and Chekhov, has only the resource of such artistry with which to resist the perception of meaninglessness.

But such implied comparisons—be-

Patricia Meyer Spacks's most recent book is Imagining a Self *(Harvard University Press).*

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tween Kepesh and a survivor of the Nazis, between Roth and Chekhov—manifestly measure insufficiency as well as continuity; the novel rests on subterranean acknowledgements of inadequacy. When Kepesh tells a retired Czech professor about his earlier difficulties with impotence, he cites Kafka—"stories of obstructed, thwarted K.s banging their heads against invisible walls, well, they suddenly had a disturbing new resonance for me." He pays lip service to his recognition that the world contains greater sufferings than his, making a conventional gesture toward the professor's superior authority in pain, yet his self-obsession governs him and the professor politely encourages it. Kepesh in fact lacks the moral stature of his interlocutor; *The Professor of Desire* does not report obstructions as profound as those recorded by Kafka: the book keeps inviting such realizations. Kepesh knows, or half-knows, his own inadequacies. The overtones of this knowledge help to generate tonal complexity: a mode of having things two ways at once.

Complexity derives, first of all, from stress on the protagonist's double relation to his own experience. At once endurer and student of his life, Kepesh observes himself as simultaneous sufferer and performer, even in his most agonized moments. Lonely, he takes to screaming into the mirror, "I want somebody! I want somebody! I want somebody!" And he comments on his own dramatization of wanting: "Sometimes I can go on like this for minutes at a time in an attempt to bring on a fit of weeping that will leave me limp and, for a while at least, empty of longing for another. I of course am not so far gone as to believe that screaming aloud in a closed-off room will make the somebody I want appear. Besides, who is it? If I knew I wouldn't have to holler into the mirror—I could write or phone. *I want somebody*, I cry—and it is my parents who arrive."

Kepesh, enduring his desperate loneliness, recognizes the painful comedy of its enactment: the ridiculousness of trying to wrench the universe to one's desires by screaming in a tiny room, the ostentatious futility of the gesture (in contrast to writing or phoning, which might conceivably accomplish something), the ludicrous disproportion between infinite want, for the unrealizable woman, and parental attempts to satisfy it. Of such disproportions, and their arduous recognition, does his experience consist.

Kepesh's eagerness to think the worst of himself coexists with his insistence on his own importance. He comments, for example, on his interest in the lascivious Baumgarten: "there are times when, listening to him speak with such shamelessness of the wide range of his satisfactions, I feel that I am in the presence of a parodied projection of myself. A parody—a possibility. . . . I am a Baumgarten locked in the Big House, caged in the kennels, a Baumgarten Klingered and Schonbrunned into submission [Klinger is Kepesh's psychiatrist, Schonbrunn, his department chairman]—while he is a Kepesh, oh, what a Kepesh! with his mouth frothing and his long tongue lolling, leash slipped and running wild." Although Baumgarten may appear to have the advantage in this comparison—slipped leashes presumably being more desirable than cages—the conversion of his friend into an agent for defining the Kepesh nature marks the narrator's insistent narcissism and demonstrates his dominance while announcing his Schonbrunned submission. Herbie Bratasky expressed a performer's power and a cynic's evaluation of himself and the rest of humanity through his repertoire of imitation farts; his disciple David Kepesh duplicates his combination of arrogance and self-disgust.

Comedy and misery, power and weakness, self-awareness and self-entrapment: paired oppositions dominate the novel, making its mood ambiguous. The movement from comic gusto to melancholy marks the process of aging: Portnoy's development, Tarnopol's (*My Life as a Man*), and Kepesh's; even Roth's literary aging, each novel since *Portnoy* darker than its predecessor (except for *The Great American Novel* [1973], an anomaly in the sequence). Finally, though, gusto and melancholy partake of one another, generating a tone which acknowledges disaster's inevitability, expresses a conviction that matters will always get worse, and insists on deriving comedy from that horror. Not always, by any means, overt comedy; often only a perception of the omnipresence of comic potential—a perception declaring refusal to suffer defeat. David Kepesh insists on surviving even as a breast; before his metamorphosis as well as after, he pours out language as a way of mastering experience although his language insists on mastery's impossibility—a mode of dealing with life implying a comic aspect to every relation between the word-spinning individual and the world outside him.

Woody Allen-watchers understand the possibilities of verbal energy conjoined with physical flaccidity: power in words, impotence in action, are familiar hallmarks of Jewish comics, professional and nonprofessional. The "Jewishness" of this novel consists mainly in what it shares with such comics: not ethnic experience (the local color of life in the Catskills matters only in the weakest

CLIMBING MT. HOOD

When our feet were at last
in the clouds
(the way you put it)
we stopped and sat
as a family group
you & me & her
as Henry Moore might have had us
you on my right knee
her on my left, all of us
huddled together
as under a blanket, but just the sky
twenty minutes
until it was time
to get up, go down
the slope, dying again

On the way back you stopped
to pick crumbled chunks
of wood—like dice—crystallized
as we would like to be
falling back into the world
black, charred stone
as we leave each other, stumbling down.

David Ray

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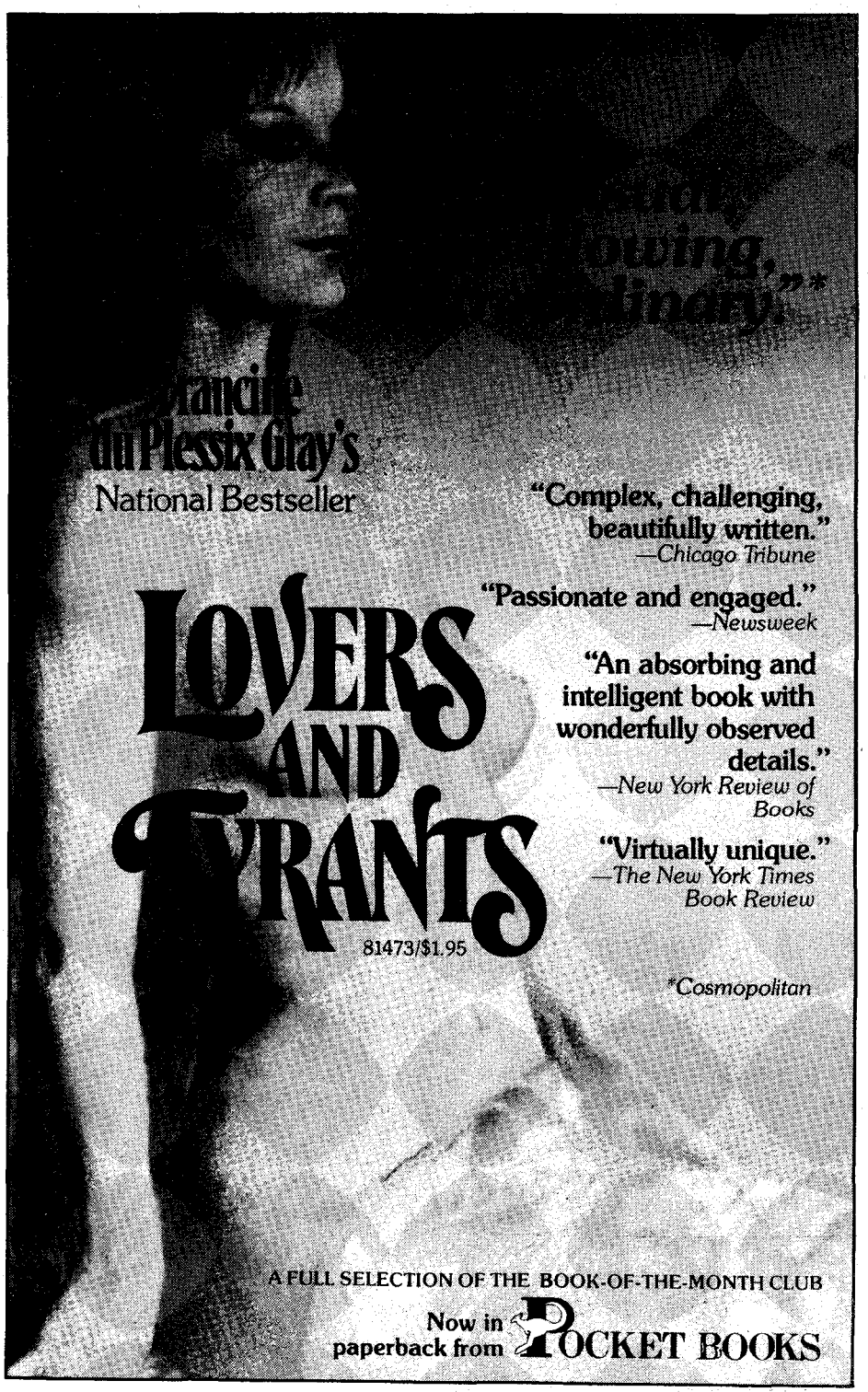
part of *The Professor of Desire,* the early sequence which offers a rather routinized version of zestful appreciation) but a tone, a rhythm. "All that nagging at her, at Helen, about the garbage and the laundry and the toast. My mother couldn't have done a better job. About every last detail!" Roth explores the import of such familiar cadences, their serious dimensions, their underlying paradox. But tone cannot solve all problems, for him or for his narrator.

For example, Roth in his recent work reveals little awareness of women's status as full-fledged human beings, with possible purposes unrelated to men. The women in *The Professor of Desire,* like those in *Portnoy* and *My Life as a Man,* objectify male fantasies, infinitely ingenious in lust or endlessly cooperative with masculine demands or totally bitchy, devoid of identity apart from their central relationships. (Sometimes they engage in activities uninvolved with the narrator, but such reported activities always have an aura of unreality.) Since the accounts of women in these first-person narratives issue from the protagonists, they may be understood as emphasizing the characters' terrible inability to escape the limits of their own imaginations. Kepesh and his predecessors see women only as adjuncts. Although they evoke vividly the aspects of their female companions that impinge on their consciousness, they show no curiosity about the women's human separateness, and little awareness that their mistresses and wives may have thoughts and feelings they do not communicate. Solipsism confines understanding, and although Roth's heroes note this fact as a general truth, they have trouble grasping its particular manifestations. Yearning to live ethical lives if they cannot manage wonderfully wicked ones, such characters flounder in incomplete perceptions, have trouble coming to terms with reality, feel angry at women for apparently needing to flounder less and for existing more comfortably with and in the real. Finally Roth's men endure the consequences of their inability to grant their women full and separate existence, self-doomed to dissatisfaction with the partial creatures they create.

All human beings suffer from blindness without understanding the scope of their own: hence men seem tragic to themselves, and comic to the gods. Inasmuch as *The Breast* provides a gloss for *The Professor of Desire,* it suggests exactly the deficiencies which we may note in Kepesh, the weaknesses which, despite the knowingness of his tone, he does not fully discover in himself: his reduction of others to agents of his gratification, his essential passivity, his emphatic blindness. The lack of distance between author and narrator in *The Professor of Desire* may make one uneasy about the novelist's awareness of his character's deficiencies; in Kepesh's total absorption with Kepesh we feel a quality of self-indulgence which the novel does not criticize. Perhaps the invocation of Chekhov is intended to provide the missing perspective. But despite his self-entrapment, David Kepesh serves a didactic purpose. In his exemplification of the dimensions and the effects of male fantasy—Roth's central subject—he functions effectively as "professor of desire," teaching the nature and the cost of that which he professes. The nature of desire is to be fueled by fantasy; its costs are endless. Roth's wry, ambiguous tone cannot altogether contain the bizarre extrava-



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gance of *The Breast*, but it adapts itself well to this more realistic version of Kepesh's plight, anatomizing the emotional perplexities of a man whose capacity for fantasy enables him constantly to reinterpret his experience, shaping his own inexorable reality which he can finally neither comprehend nor avoid. In its perception of how man creates his own impossibilities, *The Professor of Desire* is a sad and compelling book. □

Kissinger, Upstairs-Downstairs

UNCERTAIN GREATNESS: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy. *By Roger Morris. Harper & Row. 312 pp. $10.95.*

ALEX BEAM

In the epilogue to "A World Restored," an admiring study of the diplomacy of Britain's Lord Castlereagh and Austria's Prince Metternich, Henry Kissinger noted that

> . . . statesmen often share the fate of prophets, that they are without honor in their own country . . . their greatness is usually apparent only in retrospect when their intuition has become experience.

In the opinion of Roger Morris, Kissinger's greatness remains largely "unexperienced" and therefore uncertain: Kissinger's intuitions in Chile, Cyprus, Angola and Vietnam can be numbered among this country's most bitter foreign policy memories. Morris oversaw African policy for Kissinger's National Security Council until he resigned to protest the 1970 invasion of Cambodia, and he exploits his proximity to Kissinger, his first-hand knowledge of McGeorge Bundy's NSC and his excellent nose for bunk to write an engrossing upstairs-downstairs account of the "Kissinger era."

The book's outline suggests melodrama, or perhaps tragedy. First we see Nixon and Kissinger, the Establishment pariahs, seize the foreign policy apparatus from startled State Department "cookie pushers." Soon afterward the streamlined NSC is revamping "policy alternatives" from Austria to Zanzibar. Next—"peace is at hand" and openings toward the Soviet Union and China are underway. Yet the slips begin to show: starvation and genocide in Biafra and Burundi, "destabilization" in Chile and the impossible quagmire of Indochina tug at the emperor's clothes. In the end, all is revealed: the truculent 94th Congress probes the "dirty little secrets" of the SALT accords and the NSC wiretaps; Vietnam and Cambodia fall; the Reaganites howl for blood. Even Morris, who decries the sensationalism of Kissinger's press, employs some epic conventions in his tale of "Super K."

Morris first seeks to explain how Kissinger ended up where he did. He reports that when Kissinger heard of a pending offer from Nixon, he sought the advice of McGeorge Bundy who assured him that he might be able to hold out for the chairmanship of the State Department's ineffectual Policy Planning Council. Kissinger's emergence at Nixon's right hand was almost too incredible—Morris calls it "a caprice of history." Yet the author resists the "odd couple" explanation of the Nixon-Kissinger relationship which the former Secretary has been peddling since Watergate. Instead he outlines the intellectual similarities between the two men, insisting perhaps too strongly that Kissinger's childhood in Weimar Germany left him wary of domestic politics. Furthermore, Morris credits Nixon with some of the more dramatic policy initiatives often attributed to Kissinger.

Himself a testy and gifted "outsider," Morris marvels at Kissinger's bureaucratic *coup d'état*, the creation of the mini-State Department at the NSC. He would agree with Kissinger that foreign policy is too important to be left to the career diplomats, and they share a healthy disdain for the faceless parade of Wall Street lawyers and businessmen who have traditionally haunted the upper echelons of the foreign policy "elite." By demanding "zero-base" policy reviews in 1969 Kissinger sought to purge diplomatic thinking in order to deliver genuine options to the President in lieu of the "consensus" pap served in the Johnson White House.

In the first heady months of the new NSC Nixon and Kissinger ordered up eighty-five NSSM's (National Security Study Memoranda) calling for critical reappraisals of America's diplomacy. Some of the "new" options were transparent fakes, as for instance the agreement that Latin American policy should move away from Alliance for Progress sloganeering, and the renaming of hemisphere policy "Action for Progress in the Americas." This was all in keeping with Nixon's boast to the NSC: "I know the Latins—they don't care much what you do as long as you pay attention to them." Some situations changed for the worse; Morris singles out his own contribution to African policy, the "tar baby" proposals for reconciliation with the racist regimes of southern Africa, as an embarrassment to the author and the country.

The book is rich with insights into African affairs, Morris's NSC bailiwick. Kissinger cared little for issues south of Aswan, and in this he emulated his Commander in Chief, who reminded Kissinger when drafting the State of the World message in 1970 to "put something in it for the jigs." The highly touted NSC mechanism could not function without "Henry's" interest and participation, so neglected areas like Africa (and economic affairs) suffered accordingly. For nine months southern Africa policy flip-flopped back and forth between Morris's "tar baby" option and the slightly more honorable State Department policy of noninterference in Rhodesia and South Africa until events forced an undramatic compromise. For just as many months the corpses piled up in Biafra while Kissinger's head was turned and the Lagos Embassy emitted pro-Nigerian smoke. Far too late in the game Nixon remarked to Kissinger, "They're going to let them starve, aren't they, Henry?" The answer was yes, and the United States joined the British, as one senior Foreign Office official put it, in "show-(ing) conspicuous zeal in relief while in fact letting the little buggers starve out."

And in Burundi an American Ambassador peeked through his curtains while trucks loaded with corpses of Hutu tribesmen shuttled past his office; 250,000 Hutu died without a peep of protest from the foreign policy "nerve center." Coincidentally a $14 billion deposit of nickel was discovered within the host country's borders at the time of the massacres. Kissinger held his peace. No matter the continent, nonferrous metals take precedence over human rights.

Morris tells of yet another botched job East of Suez, this time in East Pakistan where American diplomats watched as our "traditional friend" Yahya Khan turned our weapons on the Bengalis. The U.S. Consulate in Dacca cabled Washington, "We are

Alex Beam is a free-lance writer who lives in New York City.

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mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by the Pakistan military." One week later the consulate repeated that the situation in East Pakistan was such that ". . . unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable," and asked that "our policies be redirected in order to salvage our nation's position as a moral leader of the free world." Their dissent was suppressed and branded "premature." In the meantime State Department spokesmen spread the indelicate lie that the United States had halted arms deliveries to West Pakistan while $35 million worth of military hardware was bound for Pakistani arsenals. Most observers were at a loss to explain the coddling of the Pakistani dictatorship —but then most observers didn't know that the Yahya Khan government was acting as Kissinger's intermediary with the Chinese. His first overtures to Peking were channeled through Islamabad, and our Pakistani "allies" provided a plane and an airfield for Kissinger's secret flight to China in July of 1971. Morris writes that "from the beginning, of course, American policy toward the humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan was hostage to its China diplomacy." Uncertain greatness indeed.

The author was present when Nixon met with the National Security Council staff and urged them "to handle the rest of the world . . . and Henry and I will end the war." Nowhere does the "Merlin of American diplomacy" (a newsweekly gushing typical of the period) appear so shallow and perplexed as in the conduct of the war in Vietnam. "I can't believe that a fourth-rate power like North Vietnam doesn't have a breaking point," Kissinger muttered; it was the American will that broke, of course, and when Kissinger offered his first major concession at the Paris peace talks in May 1971 the North Vietnamese knew they had only to fight and wait for the administration to carry out the squalid shucking of the war. Here, Morris tells us, Kissinger's legendary negotiating skill was so much fluff. Despite the sporadic acts of savagery unleashed against their country, the North Vietnamese sat patiently until Kissinger signed the thinly disguised surrender in 1973.

The book's greatest asset is Morris's crafty intelligence. The author is neither awestruck nor befuddled by the sinuosities of Kissinger's 19th-century world view. Morris describes Kissinger as an anachronism, the last of the fixers in a world which needs more subtle and less self-serving mechanics. Kissinger falls short in Morris's estimation because he failed to advance the technique of nation-statesmanship beyond the traditional *ad hoc*-ery of American foreign policy. Moreover a disappointed Morris notes that Kissinger also failed to tame the State Department "fudge factory"; he simply recast the bureaucracy in his own image so that today Kissinger men control many areas of the Carter administration's "open" foreign policy.

In conclusion Morris evokes Winston Churchill's remark about Lenin and Russia: the worst misfortune was his coming, the next worse—his leaving. While the author criticizes Kissinger harshly and informatively, he seems certain that the Carter foreign policy returnees ("the residue of a failed generation," as he once wrote of Cyrus Vance) lack the intellectual stature to handle issues such as the energy crisis, world food shortages or racial wars—the stuff of present-day diplomacy. The author acknowledges that Kissinger himself sidestepped these less glamorous areas of policy making, but still he yearns for "Super K." It is the final irony of this sophisticated critique that Morris cannot imagine a world without "Henry." "Kissinger will be gone, truly replaced by lesser men," he writes, and then urges that Kissinger return to public life:

> . . . the zealot for secrecy must become the advocate of openness, the master of bureaucratic maneuver, the proponent of bureaucratic reform, the practitioner of ruthless *Realpolitik* the champion of a new humanity in American foreign policy. The change is unlikely. . . . □

ART

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

Art movements begin in various ways. Sometimes their origins are contested: the priorities of Braque and Picasso in Cubism, though the situation is getting clearer, are by no means settled. In the United States, to speak candidly, it is only the death of some of the Abstract Expressionists that has made possible a start toward establishing a schedule of their innovations. There is no problem of this kind with Neo-Impressionism: Georges Seurat invented it; all other Neo-Impressionists are his dependents. The movement has other names, such as Pointillism, a term that refers to the systemization of the brush stroke that

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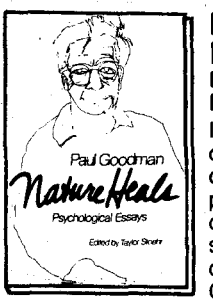

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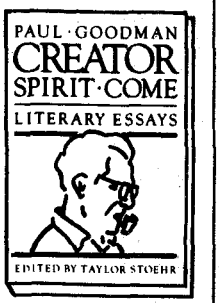

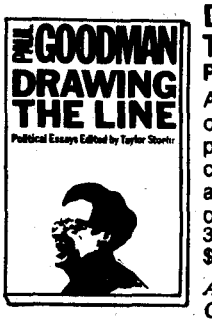

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Seurat effected. (The dashes and commas of Impressionist painting were contracted into regular points of color.) Another term is Divisionism, referring to the sharp contrasting hues of color, not mixed on the palette but set down separately on the canvas. The fact that the style has several names suggests that it caught on and was widely discussed at the time, which is in fact the case.

Seurat's technique, though developed for an exquisitely personal art, had a democratic potential, of which he was aware. He believed it possible to produce art by the consistent application of principles. That, of course, is partly any gifted person's denigration of his or her gifts, but beyond that Seurat's rules really facilitated the production of paintings. In place of dependence on inspiration, a procedure both chancy and elitist, Seurat proposed a methodology of color as quantity and brush stroke as finite unit. His practice was attractive, offering the appearance of science without the effort of attaining it. From Seurat, Neo-Impressionism fanned out like the Nile in flood. Paul Signac was crucial in the diffusion of Seurat's practice; he was the reserved Seurat's happy booster. In his writings (*D'Eugène Delacroix au Néo-Impressionisme*; in article form in 1898, book form the following year) and socially, he advanced the notion that color was a flexible instrument, amenable to simple ordering.

An exhibition of Signac's work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (until November 27) has prompted these reflections. It is a casual show, put together from the Robert Lehman collection and other Metropolitan holdings; there are four oil paintings and thirty or so works on paper, none of them major, all of them typical. The labels do not give the dates of the works: they refer to catalogue numbers, but the catalogue is not out. It is being prepared by Robert Zabo, curator of the Lehman collection. Still, behind the nonchalance is the fact that Signac is interesting, as an artist and as a publicist of Neo-Impressionism.

He met Seurat in 1884 and within two years was committed to the use of small regular strokes of divided color. The early oils (there is one of 1887 in the show) reveal a dense continuum of color points, but Signac's development is away from the hovering, crystalline snowstorms of Seurat. Signac's points are progressively enlarged and solidified until they resemble tesserae in a mosaic. In addition there is an impatient lengthening of the brush mark, making a clear directional flow. It was Signac who introduced Van Gogh to Neo-Impressionism, and in return Van Gogh seems to have influenced Signac, showing him how to make the complex stasis of Seurat's fields more dramatic. Signac's brush strokes, as they run along the main contours or axes of forms, return to gestural form of the kind that Seurat had dissolved.

Signac had a taste for port imagery that was partly personal (he liked sailing) and partly romantic. The iconography of ports derives from Claude and Turner, as well as 18th-century harbor scenes by other French painters, including Horace Vernet. Claude Lévi-Strauss has recorded his appreciation of Vernet's marines: "they allow us to relive the relationship between sea and land which still existed at that time." One of Signac's favorite ports is St. Tropez, but also Marseilles, Venice and Constantinople where the modern installations are enormous. However, he always presents his ports in terms of intimate bustle: sailing ships with colored sails, moles, lighthouses, forts—the historical nostalgia is unmistakable. In his river scenes he relishes the picturesque contrast of the funnels of tugboats and distant Gothic spires. The vigorous ornamental disporting of these elements suggests why he was such a good proselytizer—garrulous, cheerful, untiring. His position is that of a bridge between better artists than himself, Seurat of course on one side and a dozen subtle, analytical followers on the others.

Neo-Impressionism flourished in Belgium and Holland as well as France, with echoes of its quantitative analysis of color recurring through the 20th century, from Paul Klee to Op Art. (Robert L. Herbert's *Neo-Impressionism*, published by the Guggenheim Museum in 1968, is a decisive survey of the field.) The prompt expansion of Seurat's notions in the late 19th century is an early example of a phenomenon that later became familiar: the influence of an artist on other artists in the *absence* of his work. Obviously, many of his followers had seen the paintings, but others were responding not to originals but to the verbal account of which Signac was the main channel. The ability to interpret mediated information, like manifestoes or reproductions, is built into any competent user of the modern communication system. The defenders of craft standards often deplore this form of influence. The charge today is that out-of-town (read, out of New York) artists and art students are nourished on indirect, second-hand information.

Various paintings and artists have been proposed as the beginning of modern art (Manet for flatness, Munch for subjectivity, and so on), but this perpetuates the 19th-century cult of artistic individualism. Perhaps the real beginning of modern art is Neo-Impressionism: it is a reductive mode and, as such, easily transmissible by magazines and reproductions. The shortening of the lead time between innovation and the formation of a movement is typical of subsequent modern art. Neo-Impressionism went from Seurat's studio to international currency in a very short time. A little later Futurism, with the aid of railroads and newspapers, grew explosively from Milan to the world. If we consider modernity not in terms of individual style but in terms of the distribution of information, Neo-Impressionism has a singular importance as the first model of the democratization of innovation. □

Film Festival I / Harold Clurman

Thus far at the fifteenth New York Film Festival (Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center), I have attended eight entries. I shall, however, take note only of those which have most interested me, or which I expect will have wide distribution and a measure of success.

Among the first group was *Padre-Padrone* (*My Father, My Master*) directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, from a book by Gavino Ledda. It is couched in the vein of verism associated with several postwar Italian film makers. Most of the earlier films of this type had urban settings; *Padre-Padrone* is a peasant picture laid on a sheep farm in Sardinia. Ledda says that his book is based on his life and that of other young men among whom he grew up.

The picture has the virtue of entire credibility. It is without frills and possesses the power inherent in its subject. There are shocking details, particularly in the scenes of paternal cruelty and of bestial sexuality, not uncommon in backward communities removed from most civilizing influences. But there is not the slightest effort to create sensational effects.

The acting by Omero Antonutti as the father and by Saverio Marconi as

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his son, Gavino, at the age of 20, as well as by all the others, including Fabrizio Forte as the child Gavino, are admirably faithful to the director's and the writer's spirit and intention. This is true of the remarkably subdued cinematographic color (but of this more later).

Gavino's father takes his boy out of school at the age of 6, because the old man—the *padrone*—needs someone to help him with his farm. The loneliness of the place, the arduousness, the nastiness and the terror of his task impel the boy to run away. His father catches him and beats him senseless. At 20, Gavino determines to get away from his servitude. He has no refuge except the army, but he is completely illiterate and the service rejects him. He is obliged to go back to the farm and his father's tyranny.

Though he is forced to work twelve hours a day, Gavino is now fanatically resolved to educate himself. Surreptitiously, he learns to read and write and goes off again to enlist in the military. By strenuous exertion he becomes expert at technical skills. He has become independent and can, if he wishes, pursue a career anywhere in the country. But he chooses to return to his birthplace. There he fights his father, still intent on "bossing" him. Humbling the aging peasant by his rebellion, Gavino has attained true manhood. He will hereafter devote himself to enlightening and encouraging the young who are in the same case he was at the dawn of his life.

Never articulated as such, the theme is the struggle for freedom. Gavino becomes a model for all who would break the bonds, not simply of parental domination but of social impediment. *Padre-Padrone* is not a "great" picture; it is a fine one, which is rare and should be good enough for anyone.

Subtler in technique, with more modern application, is Robert Bresson's *The Devil Probably*. Though it centers on Charles, an educated and articulate Parisian youth, the film opens with the news of his suicide or murder. It deals with all his companions (male and female) of similar mold and, in a way, with most of us today.

There are semi-documentary sequences —magnificently photographed—of ecological pollution of all kinds. We see the destruction of plant and animal life through the Moloch of unrestrained industrialism. What solution, aside from total dissolution, can there be to counteract the spreading poison? We cannot, as the bitterest of Charles's friends say, return to the caves. The film dramatizes or presents other alternatives or remedies which contemporary society offers.

"Destroy everything" is the activist platform, which is indeed an escape. But Charles, played by Antoine Monnier, of saintly countenance, is disgusted by its stupidity. He and all his pals wish to live—even the apostle of nihilism does, and, as he rightly says, not for any sound "reason" but simply because he is human.

There is sex: "Make love like a furious beast," one of the characters says. But neither the men nor the women appear to enjoy the prescription: it either numbs or sickens them. Love? They are uncertain as to whom or how they love or whether in fact they love at all—though affection and kindness dwell within nearly all of them. The impasse of their minds and impulses leads to a kind of stolid mournfulness.

One of the lot takes to drugs. The others reject such relief. Charles contemplates suicide. His friends believe or hope he may be saved from such morbidity by psychoanalysis. A psychoanalyst whom he consults intimates that Charles's horror of life, which the doctor labels "hostility," may have been caused by his father having thrashed him when he was a kid. The doctor, in his bootless erudition, mentions that when a citizen of Rome wanted to do away with himself, he had a slave or a friend serve as the "executioner." Charles takes the inadvertent hint.

My account of the proceedings is necessarily much more simplistic than the film. Everyone, except the doctor, is treated with sympathy, though the tone always retains Bresson's characteristic austerity. He has his actors play with a minimum of overt expressiveness. At one point, two of the young people are riding on a bus; they ask themselves "who is responsible for the evil in the world today?" A man who has heard the question finally speaks up: "The devil probably." The audience laughs, but the quip is a clue to Bresson's personality as man and artist.

It should be clear that while Bresson has no predilection for the church, or more precisely, the clergy, he is a deeply religious man. He never asserts anything. He is certain of nothing except that life is something to be endured with great fortitude and humility: with dignity. If this is not a pessimistic, then it is a stoic, Christianity. We are always aware of an unsentimental compassion. His films, therefore, which otherwise

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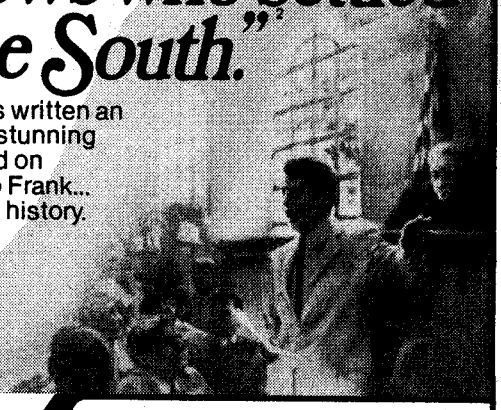

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might prove oppressive, are redeemed by the nobility of his moral character and artistry.

A picture in a happier key is Agnès Varda's *One Sings, the Other Doesn't*. It is colorfully feminist. It presents two young women. One of them leaves her strait-laced middle-class family, marries an Iranian by whom she has a child. She accompanies her husband to Iran for a while, but they soon return to Paris. He insists that he take their child back with him to Iran; she proposes that he give her a second child to grow up in France.

As a virgin she was a lovely thing; after her emancipation she joins a rock band as a frizzy-haired cutie, and later forms an itinerant group of which the theme song is *I Am a Woman, I Am Me*. One feels like heckling, "Really?"

Her friend, who does not sing, has an affair with an artist photographer by whom she has a child. Unable to earn a living, the man hangs himself. She raises her child on her parents' farm and later marries a wholesome physician. Both women have realized themselves. It is all quite pretty and pretty banal, as well as dumb.

Salò is the picture Pasolini completed shortly before his death by murder at the hands of a youth he picked up. The picture is no less horrendous than the gifted director's fate, in the sense that it is repellent in its imagery and in the savage hate it embodies. One cannot avoid thinking that a person so possessed by hate is a person who also hates himself.

The film is based on the schema of the Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. The locale is the republic of Salò, somewhere in Italy under the Fascist regime. The chiefs of the local government—and by inference of all Italy and "tomorrow the world"—are committed to making whores of their young. The various episodes into which the picture is divided expose the process of schooling for this depraved purpose. Sodomy on an epic scale is the least of it.

Salò may achieve a degree of commercial success through its very vileness. It is neither erotic nor pornographic; it is an affliction. Still I take this opportunity to point out in passing that pornography as such is unutterably boring, attractive only to the sexually deprived or deficient.

Pasolini was an artist and a wholly sincere, if increasingly thoroughly muddled, man. His rage at himself as much as at the foul world he sought to depict, after he made his famous film *The Passion According to Saint Matthew*, drove him to the edge of insanity and in *Salò*, sadly, beyond it. The management of the festival warns that the picture is "for strong-stomached adults." Apparently, I am not one of the breed; I left before the picture's end.

I propose a final observation which may cause some consternation, perhaps ridicule. Technicolor is no doubt here to stay and may come to be perfected. But I generally find it sweetens and overprettifies even the ugliest environments: even slums are glamorized. Faces usually look made up and sometimes induce the impression of having been boiled. What is more, Technicolor does not add to verisimilitude. The world has color but not an overlay of glistening pigment. Black-and-white photography, by its very neutrality, is closer to the way we see things.

There are some cinematographers I would except from my complaint: Sven Nykvist (Ingmar Bergman's frequent associate) for example, but I still hold to my prejudice. Everyone takes Technicolor for granted; perhaps some day I will too: it is the habit of humanity to accommodate itself to certain improvements that should not be acceptable. □

FILMS

ROBERT HATCH

Wim Wenders's *The American Friend* (from a novel by Patricia Highsmith) is a feverish thriller in the current mode of elliptical narration and stylish urban landscape that is not being helped by critical testimonies to its deeper significance. Films that recommend themselves by the oddity of their characters and the violence of their sensations need not be plausible; indeed, the very impertinence of their assumptions can be part of the fun. But as soon as someone proposes that more substantial matters are under consideration—in this case the disintegration of personality under the pressures of the age and the mysterious alchemy of friendship—the tipsy construction collapses from a shrug of common sense.

This picture is entertainment of a familiar sort, made momentarily engrossing by small ingenuities. The hero, Jonathan Zimmermann (Bruno Ganz), is a sober, compact, family-oriented Hamburg picture restorer and frame maker who is under sentence of death from one of those diseases favored by romancers because, though they may strike down their victim at any time, they meanwhile leave him free to engage in rigorous exercise. His evil genius and sudden friend is a spooky international art crook in a cowboy hat who fronts for a popular American painter now feigning death in order to boost the value of his "posthumous" canvases, but nevertheless occupying a studio in the very center of New York's SoHo, where every third person in the street is a painter, dealer or critic. The cowboy (Dennis Hopper) puts Jonathan in touch with a freely perspiring Frenchman who, for reasons I didn't catch, is determined to eliminate any members of the U.S. Mafia bold enough to visit the Continent, and who urgently needs a gunman for this mission. The frame maker, unable to think clearly because of his medical, therefore financial, worries, agrees to accept the work and, though completely innocent in the techniques of assassination, carries out his first murder successfully on the escalator of the Paris Metro's conveniently deserted La Défense station. This gives him quite a bang, as you might say, and he is readily cajoled into a bit of garrotting and body dumping on a night express, where Ripley, the American friend, appears opportunely (there is a faint smell of brimstone about Ripley) to help him dispose of some hideously competent-looking opponents. From then on the picture careens off into Hitchcock country where, among other tested devices, one encounters a bandaged figure in an ambulance that seems to be connected with no particular hospital.

All familiar enough, but cunningly put together and the rough spots smoothed over with ambiguities. How-

STANDPOINT

The wind doesn't move us
all the same. The shiver
of wheat and wild baby-walnuts
the chatter of birch wands
and medals, the taller, stiffer
maples full of seething
the sleep of cut grass—
further back,
slow black bells
and secret silver trills.

The cloudcover couldn't matter
to these clay colors—
they are fresher, sharper,
alone or together. . . .

This wind
keeps me free.
It is the speed
of light that chains us.

Milton Kessler

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ever, persons really puzzled about what distintegrates personality or where the springs of friendship are to be found should seek out someone like Chekhov. It's no good scratching one's head over tomfoolery, however well packaged.

It was no small task to bring to the screen a play as compact and immediately menacing as Miguel Pinero's *Short Eyes*, but Robert M. Young, working with a screenplay by the author, has transcribed these qualities almost intact. He has kept the action within one cell block of the New York House of Detention (the Tombs) and has put together a company (only a few members are from the original cast) that works with the mutual understanding of good repertory to sustain the rhythm of caged men circling one another in the wariest dance of survival. The inmates are Latins, blacks, and a minority of whites; they attempt to observe a code of mutual tolerance, they form temporary alliances across ethnic lines for momentary advantage, but basically they are hostile squads in an armed camp.

The game of prisoner's base they play, with ingeniously hafted razor blades to enforce it, is at least an escape from the boredom of their days, but it is dangerous and wearing. The arrival, then, of Clark Davis (Bruce Davison) on the floor provides a target on which they can cooperate in a semblance of group harmony. He is white, educated, middle class, entirely unfamiliar with prison life—and an alleged child molester, therefore a monster and fair game for this company of outlaws.

Davis is the focus of the film, but the almost passive focus. What holds you is the shifting pattern of bloodlust, compassion and sexual tension that animates the company as it circles around him. The urge to hurt, even to kill—somehow to get revenge for the fix they are in—that these men have hitherto confined to lunges and bravado because no one of them dared expose his flank, now has a soft, perfectly acceptable lamb for torture.

Short Eyes is ugly, menacing and authentic. It is hailed as the most persuasive picture of prison life today that has yet been written, and the menace (for obvious reasons the play was more effective in this respect) arises from the frighteningly close contact with men whose motives are as incalculable as their actions are extreme. I think Pinero was reaching for more than that; I think he was trying to show that people, however extreme their situation, will attempt to form a society that makes some sense of their lives. The dialogue carries overtones of this impulse, and when the moment comes to execute Davis there is suddenly an appeal to what the committee has decided. But Pinero, though his knowledge of prison life is profound, is a neophyte playwright. His ear is perfect, but his conception of character tends toward extremes of good and evil, and his narrative expires in a blur of moral confusion. So one is left with the most vivid of external impressions, but at a loss to decide what conclusion one is intended to draw from it. Pinero has a formidable talent for the stage (or screen); if he can now steer clear of the police, which seems to be a problem for him, there is no reason why he should not drive his purpose home. □

TELEVISION

PETER SOURIAN

Frederick Wiseman's TV documentaries insist extraordinarily on the ordinary. In *Meat*, we watched a computerized system sell cattle, herd them into feeding lots and slaughter and butcher them in a Rockettes' choreography of purest efficiency; Wiseman's juxtapositional editing showed the men who did this work being spiritually processed as well. In *Welfare*, it turned out that the liveliness of people can be no more than a vast nuisance to a society, depending on the values it reflects. In *Primate*, we saw utterly dignified animals more "human" in their modest vulnerability than their human tyrants, researchers with a neat justification for their need to control life by killing it, after caging and maiming elaborately in the disguised service of their own unacknowledged fear of mortality. In each of Wiseman's dozen films the viewer went through much else along the way, each time by exposure to some institution, important, yet not immediately experienced by many of us.

Canal Zone, his new and timely two-hour production (October 7 on New York's Channel 13, which has a long-term contract with him) may be the richest in implication of Wiseman's films —deceptively so, for it is even more extraordinarily ordinary than the others, yet with many of the same characteristics, particularly with regard to method. As with the others, exposition tends to come from the proper authority within the institution concerned, and constitutes a kind of base line. And once again there is no commentary, according to the *show, don't tell* dictum familiar to students in fiction-writing courses; and no music, only voices frequently contending—or in tune—with the various sounds of machinery.

There is also the doggedly accretive footage, novelistic in the way it relentlessly yet very selectively gives you ample time to experience what Wiseman wishes to convey; no *60 Minutes* anchorman he. Then there is the good Wiseman refusal to countenance such a thing as a passive viewer. You are obliged to think imaginatively, to put the pieces together for yourself, or face utter boredom—in spite of the endlessly repeated cant that TV is *per se* a monstrous engenderer of passivity (as if, by contrasting example, the act of reading tripe demanded something verging on dynamic genius).

Finally there is, thank God, artifice: the steady deployment of silence and cunning, and the cultivation of detachment in the service of a passionate, extended design demanding patience from everywhere. For Wiseman is not a reporter; he is a closet fictioneer. He is not out to investigate and expose a Nixon, Calley, or Lance in order that such offending motes be ceremoniously removed, only to be replaced by others. Rather he is hunting down the *idea* of the thing. And he's already had his fingers burned a few times, once by Elliot Richardson who as Attorney Gen-

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eral of Massachusetts got a restraining order against showing *Titicut Follies*. Artists, like scientists, get burned more readily than reporters because they are more dangerous, hunting more dangerous game. Because if getting at the idea of a thing *does* find a genuine rather than merely fashionable response in the beholder, watch out: essential change will ensue.

In *Canal Zone* we first see the locks function as a freighter with the depressingly unromantic name of *Toyota Maru #6* (carrying Toyotas to be sure) passes through. We then learn out of the mouth of Harold Parfitt, Governor of the Canal Zone, the interesting fact that the Canal Zone Corporation must by law break even financially, something difficult to achieve, without a fat war somewhere; also that the plant tends to deteriorate. (No wonder we're so anxious to ditch the ditch.) After this we attend the meeting of a group of worried American workers, long-time residents who fear, with probably good reason, that the country to which they have been especially and outmodedly so loyal cares not a fig for their precarious futures.

Then there are two high school graduation speeches (a truly sweet one on friendship and a nasty one fatuously deploring those people who for some reason just don't seem to aim high in life) going on while a member of the American underclass hefts folding chairs. Blacks are often present in Wiseman's films as a distinct group and, further, a distinct culture. In *Primate*, for example, there are four groups: white researchers, machines, apes and blacks, in roughly that order.

There is a funny American scene (everything is a little late seeping down to the Canal Zone) in which an inept marriage-counselor couple bray about intimate communication to clients much more happily married than they. There is a church preacher right out of Sinclair Lewis's Zenith—talk about time-lag. Especially there are various patriotic ceremonies—pompous, foolish, touching. The film ends with a clunky Memorial Day ceremony, people bearing wreaths and marching stiffly up to graves (even the nice boy with the sane speech about friendship at graduation), after which there is a startling final cut to the blacks at their black cemetery tending the graves of their dead with unmistakably loving expressiveness!

It's the end of an era, the end of colonialism in the old sense; we've developed much more efficient ways to run things now, and these loyal servants in the Canal Zone are bewildered, worried and still loyal. No one cares about that stuff any more, nor do we care about them, or about anyone in difficulty, really. For us, in spite of our busy, endless rhetoric, everyone is expendable—parents, children, brothers, wards. Paper plates all. Even the French, who rarely stoop to pretend to any humanity but sometimes practice it if it doesn't cost overmuch, felt obliged after Algeria to aid the displaced *pied noir*, often not an especially worthy type.

In his previous films Wiseman was often jazzier with his metaphorical play. I find *Canal Zone* more convincing, more complex, much more implicitly loving. I was never secure about the strength of Wiseman's compassion, though I trusted the outrage and fine terror. So this is more classic; I presumptuously venture to feel that Wiseman likes life more these days.

For example, he has a real heroine in this film. She's not black, she's not a welfare case, she's not crazy, she's not a monkey to be vivisected, she's not a *patriot*. She's a freckled girl about 20 who's taking a Rorschach test. She has problems, her answers are grave but hopeful, she's worried about the future, pregnant; she believes that if you try a lot *maybe* something will get better. She becomes especially beautiful until the Rorschach technician begins to have a face too. Expressiveness, life; the feeling is contagious and it's romantic in the good, not Bovary, sense—romance as a real part of human life.

Wiseman is perfectly sane to despair of effecting change by showing the truth. Americans are deluged with exposés; there are about three a week on *60 Minutes* alone. He says, "I no longer have the view that there might be some direct relationship between what I was able to show in these films and the achievement of social change. Consider the massive effort it took to make the American people think about the Vietnam War, or about integration, or about any other major social problem."

Well, of course. No matter how strong an artist, you cannot show the shame of emotional deadness to emotionally dead people. By definition, you are waving in their faces the very thing to which they cannot respond.

In depicting these institutions, Wiseman is showing what happens when we become uncivilized—that is to say, separated or extremely insulated from the ordinary realities of life. Interestingly, Wiseman's film about the Kansas City police, *Law and Order*, is more sympathetic toward most of the cops than he had apparently expected it would be. Is it simply because they are forced to deal with reality in its human variety, to make realistic decisions involving real people, whether they do it well or not?

I have several times been told by foreigners that we don't seem to laugh much, though we smile a great deal and are very pleasant. Our young people especially are not perceived as great laughers. You can be unhappy and laugh; you can be suffering misfortune and laugh. You cannot, however, belly-laugh without having had a perception of a contrast between ordinary reality and something else. I fear we are exporting our butcher-ish efficiency to the world. It may very well be a mad efficiency.

I remember walking, years ago, through Les Halles in the center of Paris late at night. The slaughtered carcasses of beef were there for all to see, swaying in that cavernous ancient place, called the Belly of Paris. What is terrifying is not the slaughtered carcasses of beasts about to be devoured by us. That's a part of reality, quite close in fact to the center of things. What is terrifying is that it be done in some altogether special place, with us *too* safely removed, awaiting the neat little cello-wrapped result. I was neither frightened, nor depressed, nor made unhappy by all that midnight mortality smack before me like a strong Chaim Soutine canvas.

Les Halles no longer exists; the meat is now hygienically processed out in Rungis, near Orly. Paris has no belly, or, grotesquely, the belly of Paris is out of town.

Wiseman has said he would like to do a "fiction film." He may as well; perhaps it's time he came out of the closet and took his chances. He certainly has enough of a real gift for narrative, enough of one to appear superficially to dispense with it while actually practicing it with a fine determined artifice in the cutting room. Fiction is the only way, finally, to get at the truth whole, and not have to prove anything before a committee. Wiseman has been doing it anyway, but more like a Zola than a Balzac, going after the institutions merely, and their putative effect on people. Institutions change when people change, at least as much as the other way around. I feel that Wiseman has tended to perceive people—as Zola insisted they be seen—as beasts themselves. Balzac is every bit as painful as Zola, and he understands the workings of institutions better than Zola did, but it is people, good and bad, that engage his passion, his deepest fascination. □

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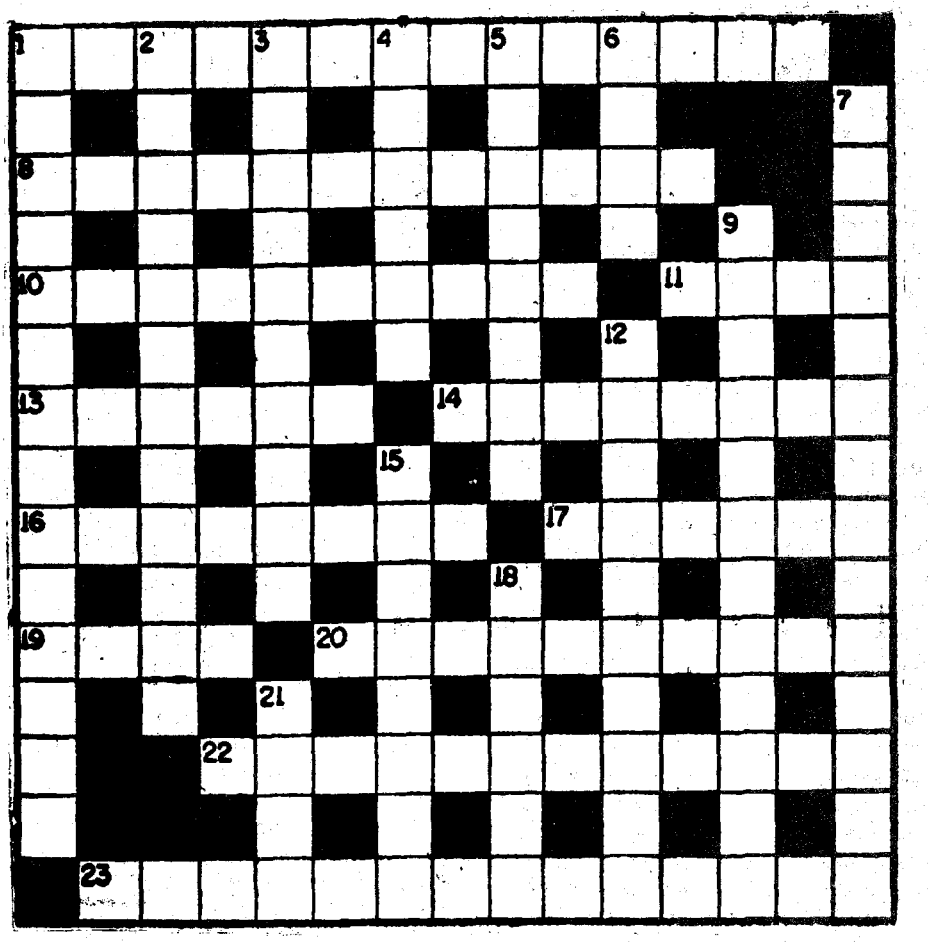
Crossword Puzzle No. 1697

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Not the strain felt by a board expert at the beach—though it might be on water. (7,7)
8 What one as drunk as a judge would feel like? (4,8)
10 Where to find fingers or toes placed in a difficult position. (3,2,1,4)
11 One might so intend the average to be low. (4)
13 From which people serve themselves food and punch? (6)
14 Proving the rat count includes at least one rat. (8)
16 It's a sign it ionizes, at least in part, a system of firing. (8)
17 Descriptive of Miss Muffet and Jack Horner. (6)
19 Movement suggesting below average painting? (4)
20 The round table should still be able to serve such. (6,4)
22 Ringer that if changed could deliver the goods. (7,5)
23 Though they carry weight, one might look down on reading such. (8,6)

DOWN

1 Not the creation of a particular group following the same artistic beliefs—though one might have a number in NYC. (6,8)
2 You shouldn't be intruding with it. (5,2,5)
3 One might be decked out with them. (10)
4 Not necessarily the way to pen sheep, as one might gather. (6)
5 This is high praise indeed! (8)
6 What one might do on back of this is something only friends come up with. (4)
7 At that time, the upper region of space comes down where you might expect to find tulips. (3,11)
9 An admonition to improve and grow old with the dance. (3,2,3,4)
12 I act in step with a sterile sort of it. (10)
15 The start of some uprising at a South American capital can prove quite a nuisance—you might have to give it a 6 down. (8)
18 Violent destruction could possibly come to the border. (6)
21 It should span under a foot. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1696

ACROSS: 4 Please; 11 Diploma; 12 Regroup; 13 Crosseyed; 14 Franc; 15 After a fashion; 17 Acquired taste; 22 Urban; 24 Abridging; 25 Termite; 26 Overdue; 27 Nutmeg; 28 Usher. DOWN: 2 Rips off; 3 Trousseau; 5 and 20 Leg of mutton; 6 Avocado; 7 and 1 Expectorate; 8 Edict; 9 Baby carriages; 10 Bride and groom; 16 Headdress; 18 Cabaret; 19 Twiddle; 21 Ogden; 23 Noise.

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